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HiSTORY MAGAZINE

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February 2020 / **www.historyextra.com**

THE GREAT ARMADA MYTH

Lucy Worsley debunks Elizabeth I's finest hour

George IV
The debonair degenerate

Liberated from Auschwitz
Life after the Holocaust

Could medieval England have converted to Islam?

The woman who gave birth to rabbits in 1726

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WELCOME

BBC HiSTORY MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2020

“‘I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too.’ Elizabeth I’s speech at Tilbury, in the face of the Spanish navy, is one of the best-known episodes in English history. But, as with so many other events that dominate our national narrative, has **the true story of the Armada** been overshadowed by legend? In this month’s cover feature, on page 50, Lucy Worsley sinks some of the abiding myths of the ‘miracle’ of 1588.

This issue is published a few days before the **75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz**, a symbolic moment whose date now serves as the annual commemoration of the Holocaust. The BBC is marking the milestone with several new programmes, and in this month’s magazine you’ll find a piece by Richard J Evans, one of the world’s leading experts on Nazi Germany. Surveying the closing months of the war, he reveals how the crimes of the Third Reich were laid bare to the world and how Europe sought to make sense of what happened. Turn to page 26 for that.

One of the most pressing issues of the 21st century is climate change. As we face up to the often dramatic consequences of shifting weather patterns, what can we learn from the past? On page 20, Brian Fagan chronicles the **Little Ice Age** to explore how it affected Britons and what steps they took to mitigate its worst effects.

I hope you enjoy the issue.

Rob Attar
Editor

THIS ISSUE’S CONTRIBUTORS

Brian Fagan

The Little Ice Age fascinates me as a vignette of people adapting to constantly changing climate conditions over several centuries. And they had no weather forecasts, nor central heating either! **Brian reveals how the lives of Britons were transformed by the Little Ice Age on page 20**

Stella Tillyard

George IV has endured a terrible press since he acceded to the throne 200 years ago. Yet, as my latest book on the king reveals, he had strengths as well as those well-documented weaknesses. **Stella brings the two, contrasting sides of George IV to life on page 34**

Sundari Anitha

Tired of encountering stereotypes of south Asian women as passive and domesticated, Ruth Pearson and I researched their historic contributions to the struggles for workers’ rights in the UK. **Sundari Anitha and Ruth Pearson tell the story of the Grunwick dispute on page 44**

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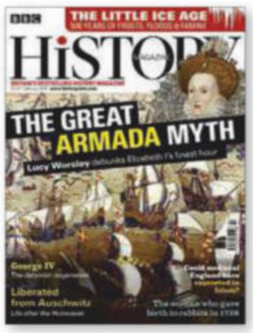

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COVER IMAGES: PAINTING OF THE ARMADA, 16TH CENTURY: GETTY IMAGES. ELIZABETH I: BRIDGEMAN. ICICLES: DREAMSTIME.
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"I CAN BUY A PATEL FOR £15"
NOT ANY MORE
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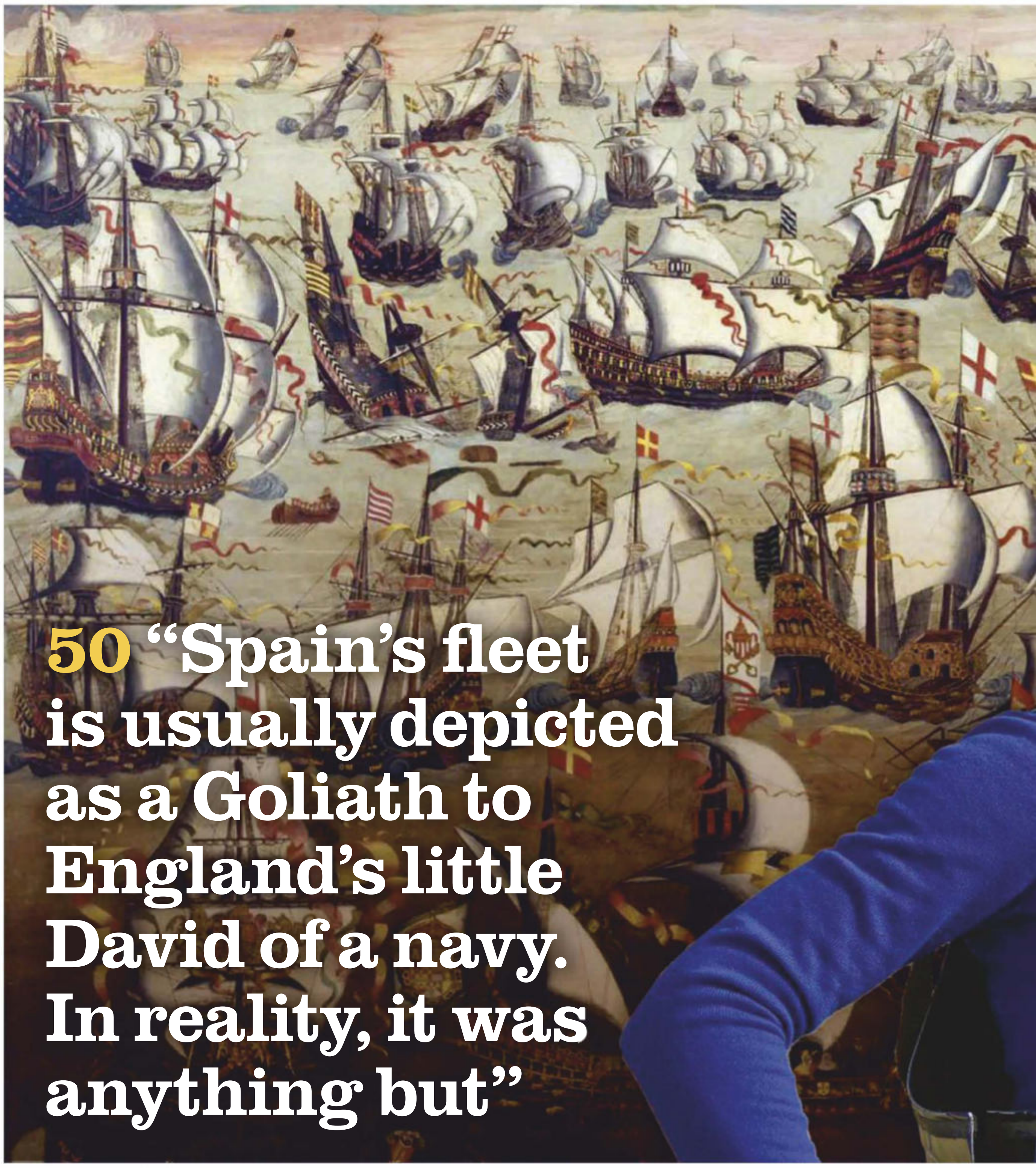

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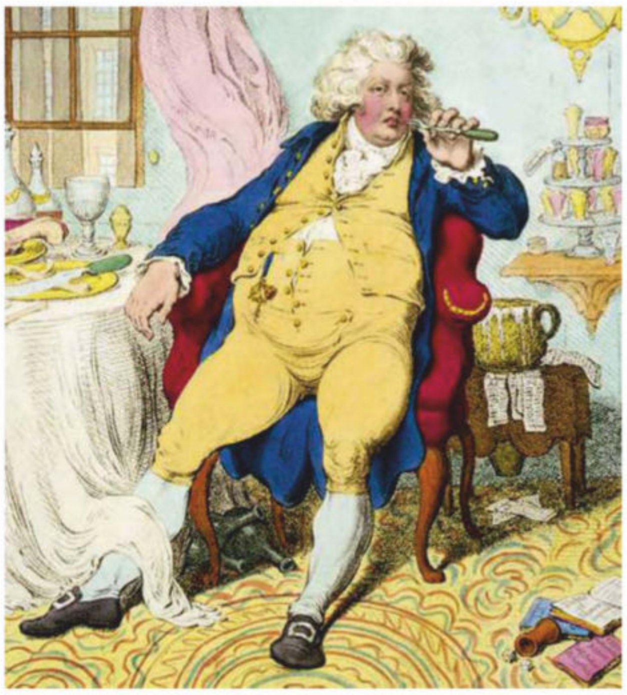

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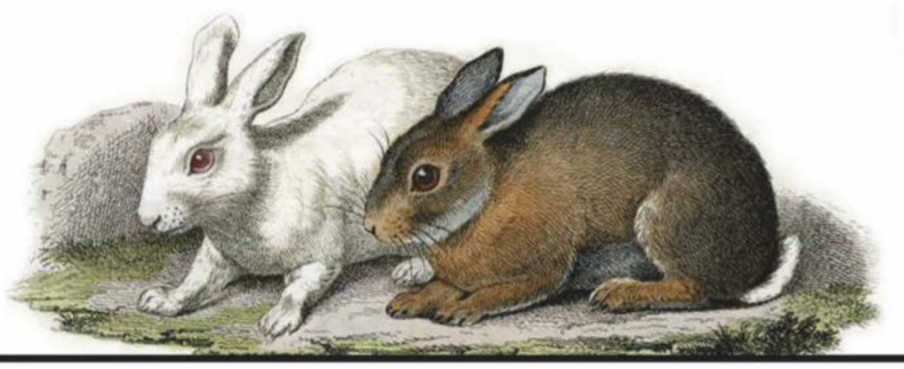

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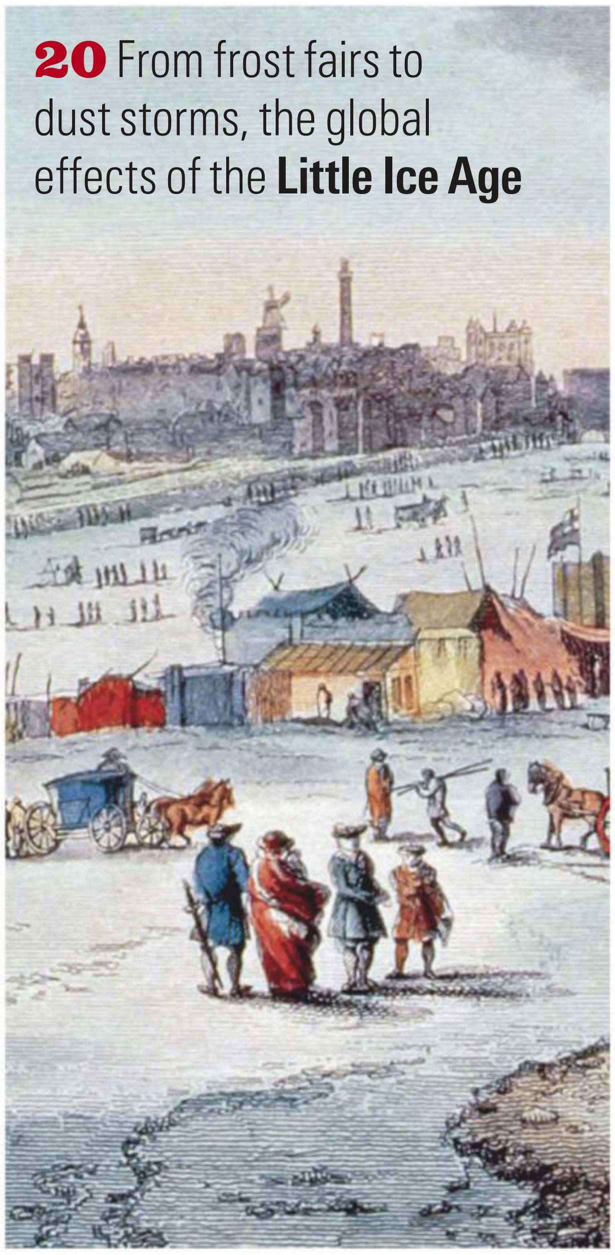

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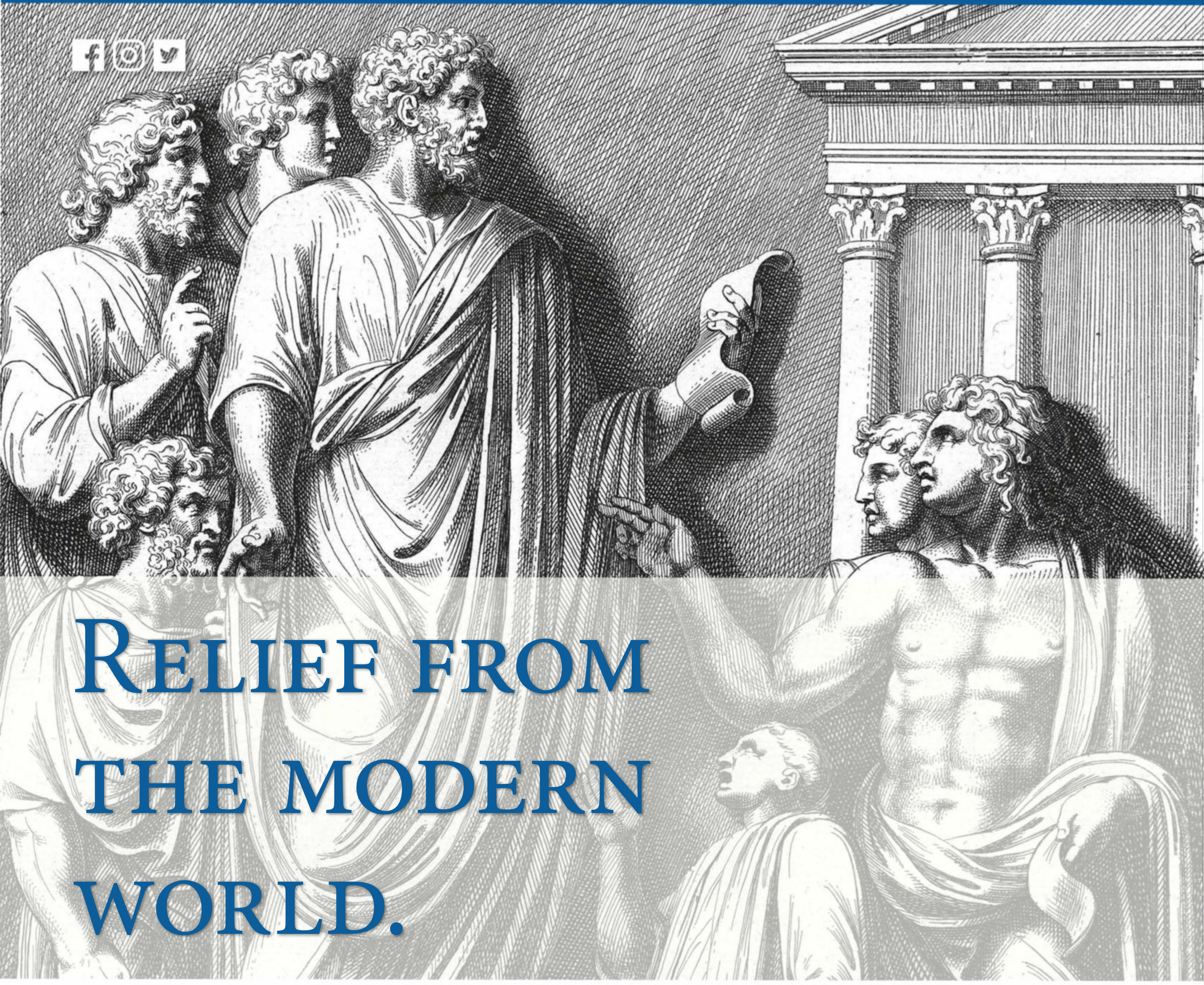

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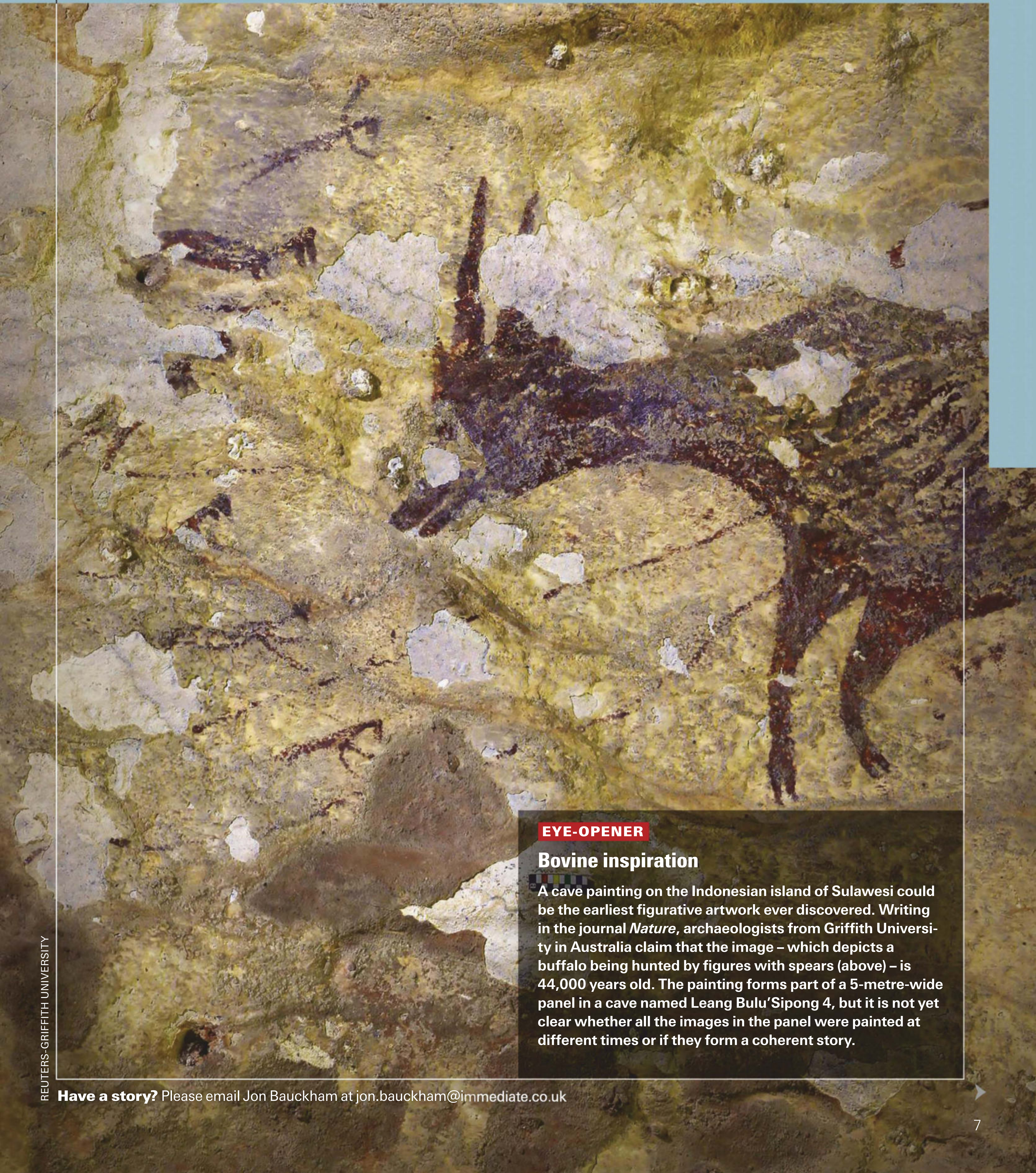

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EYE-OPENER

Bovine inspiration

A cave painting on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi could be the earliest figurative artwork ever discovered. Writing in the journal *Nature*, archaeologists from Griffith University in Australia claim that the image – which depicts a buffalo being hunted by figures with spears (above) – is 44,000 years old. The painting forms part of a 5-metre-wide panel in a cave named Leang Bulu'Sipong 4, but it is not yet clear whether all the images in the panel were painted at different times or if they form a coherent story.

Have a story? Please email Jon Bauckham at jon.bauckham@immediate.co.uk

TALKING POINTS

Back in time for dinner

A hypothetical question posed by Janina Ramirez on Twitter resulted in a flurry of imaginative responses from historians. **ANNA WHITELOCK** examines some of the highlights

It's always fascinating when historians pose questions on Twitter, so when **Janina Ramirez** (@DrJaninaRamirez) asked her followers who their ideal historical dinner party guest would be, people gladly obliged. In doing so, they perhaps revealed as much about themselves and their own interests as about their guests.

Kicking off the conversation, architectural historian **Jonathan Foyle** (@JonathanFoyle) had a very specific man in mind. "George Shaw of Uppermill," he declared, in reference to the Victorian antiquarian who unwittingly purchased a four-poster once owned by Henry VII. "I want to ask him which house he went to near Huddersfield in 1842 to inspect a dilapidated old bed."

Looking to more famous historical figures, **Alice Roberts** (@theAliceRoberts) selected the English fossil collector, dealer and palaeontologist Mary Anning, while **Sharon Bennett Connolly** (@Thehistorybits) picked medieval landowner Nicola de la Haie. "I would love to hear what she really thought of King John," she mused.

Historical heroines were also on the agenda for **Helen Leighton-Rose** (@C18th_19thWomen), who chose an 18th-century Scotswoman named Jannet Duncan: "Liaisons with Dragoons, pregnant by the master of the linen factory, sent to Edinburgh to have and leave the child – she subverted the patriarchy, came home, told her tale," she explained. "How much I would like to ask her."

Join the debate at twitter.com/historyextra

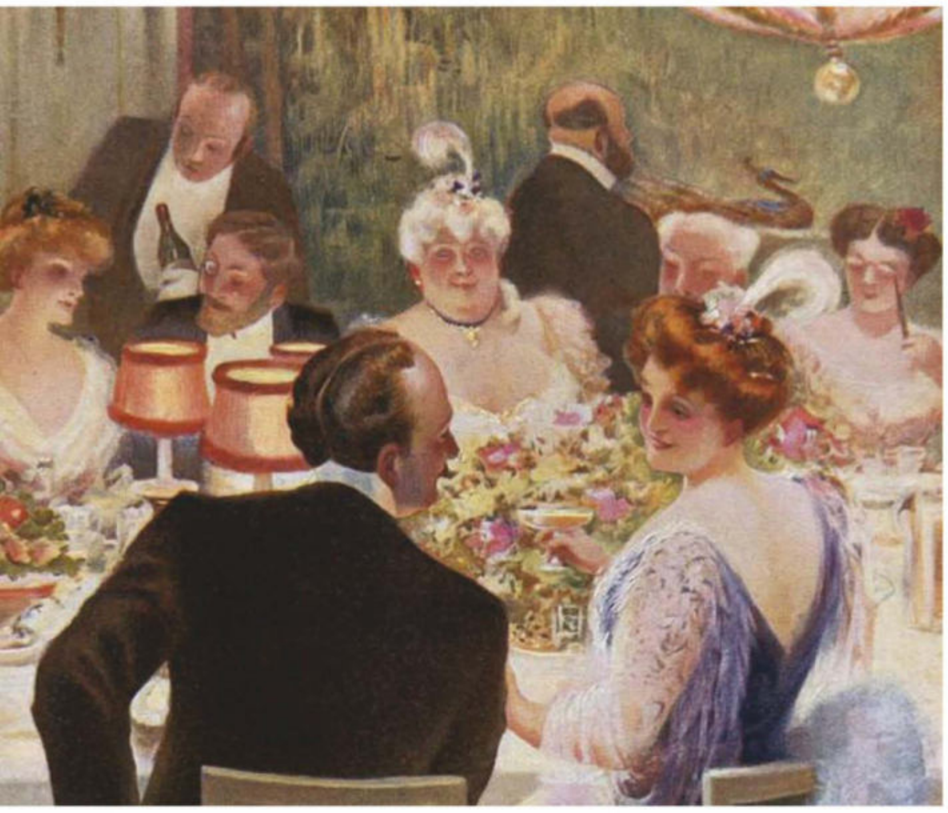
But perhaps the greatest difficultly participants encountered was narrowing their shortlist down to a single guest. **Stephen Barker** (@Stephen25367746) ended up with quite a selection but eventually settled on "Sir John Soane, Sydney Smith and Osbert Lancaster", while **Jim Bagnall** (@Jim_Bagnall) declared he would have to pick both Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage.

A Tweeter named **History Dave** (@fatherofpod) looked to more recent times. "I would have David Trimble, John Hume, David Ervine, Bill Clinton and Gerry Adams," he wrote. "The Good Friday Agreement discussions would be endlessly fascinating."

The Venerable Bede was initially the pick of **Robert Lloyd-Sweet** (@HistPlacesRob), but he eventually chose the historian Ronald Hutton, known for his unique dress sense. "He's not actually historical, but [he] could fit into many centuries without too much adjustment," signing off with "#Ronald4NextDrWho". Well, there's a thought! H

Anna Whitelock is head of history at Royal Holloway, University of London

> "The greatest difficulty was narrowing down the shortlist to a single guest"



Guests are wined and dined at a French party, from an illustration dated 1905

The record treasury at Ireland's former Public Record Office contained more than 100,000 sq ft of shelving

IRISH HISTORY

Ireland to 'rebuild' lost archive

A huge archive of historic records destroyed during the Irish Civil War is to be digitally recreated thanks to a new virtual reality project.

Supported by a €2.5m (£2.1m) grant from the Irish government, the 'Beyond 2022' initiative aims to build a 3D replica of the former Public Record Office in Dublin, which was set ablaze during fighting on 30 June 1922.

Due to be unveiled on the centenary of the fire in 2022, the digital model will enable researchers to access thousands of 'lost' records, pieced together using duplicates and transcripts of material scattered across the globe.

Highlights among the resurrected collections will include English state papers relating to the governance of Ireland dating back to the 13th century, plus two religious censuses listing people's faiths in 1740 and 1766.

Already, more than 200 volumes of handwritten documents – together containing 25 million words – have been identified for digitisation, and will be available to browse on shelves inside the virtual repository. Fire-damaged fragments pulled from the wreckage will also be accessible in digital form.

The initiative is being spearheaded by Trinity College Dublin, with support from the National Archives of Ireland, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, the Irish Manuscripts Commission and the UK National Archives.

Ireland's culture minister, Josepha Madigan, said the breadth of material due to be digitised was "astounding".

"New generations of scholars will have unprecedented opportunities to reconnect with our shared history and heritage," she added. "Indeed, anyone with an interest in history, on the island of Ireland and around the globe, will be able to engage with the past in a completely new and exciting way that is personal and meaningful." H

MARY EVANS/NATIONAL ARCHIVES IRELAND

"RUSCO"
TOILET ROLL
F.E. RUSSELL
CHEMIST & OPTICIAN
LETCHWORTH

A GOOD MONTH FOR...

LAVATORY HISTORY

An 83-year-old toilet roll (above) has been voted 'Object of the Year' by Hertfordshire residents. The unusual artefact, from the Garden City Collection in Letchworth, beat 10 other items to win the accolade at the Hertfordshire Association of Museums Awards 2019.

CHEWING GUM

Scientists have created a genetic portrait of a woman who lived nearly 6,000 years ago thanks to a piece of Neolithic 'chewing gum' found in Denmark. DNA and food fragments preserved in the birch tar reveals she had dark hair and blue eyes and had eaten a meal of duck and hazelnuts.

A BAD MONTH FOR...

THE 'PARTHENON'

The temple on top of the Acropolis in Athens has been known by the incorrect name for 2,000 years, claims a new study. Dutch researchers say that the 'Parthenon' actually refers to an entirely different structure on the Acropolis.

HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**

Stone figures found on Orkney

Archaeologists have unearthed nine unusual Bronze Age figures on the Scottish island of Orkney. The carved stone sculptures, which were found among the foundations of an ancient building, vaguely resemble the human form with shoulders, neck and a head. Experts believe they may have secured mooring ropes keeping the roof of the building in place.

Plague severity 'overstated'

The Justinianic Plague that devastated parts of Europe and Asia from the mid-sixth century may not have been as deadly as once thought. A new study led by University of Maryland researchers has discovered, among other findings, that pollen levels from the period – which can be used to measure agricultural activity – do not show the patterns expected during a plague pandemic.

Amazon pulls Auschwitz ornaments from site

Online retail giant Amazon has come in for criticism after it was found to be selling Auschwitz-themed Christmas ornaments. The company was forced to take action after the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum drew attention to the items, which included tree decorations emblazoned with images of the camp's buildings. The products were listed by a third-party vendor, but have since been taken off-sale.

€1bn jewel heist hits German city

Treasures worth €1bn (£855m) have been stolen during a heist in Dresden. The items, including brooches and a diamond-encrusted sword, were raided from the Grünes Gewölbe ('Green Vault') inside the city's royal palace on 25 November. Experts fear that the jewellery, from a collection created in 1723–30 by Augustus II of Saxony, may never be found intact. H

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:
Stone figures unearthed near Finstown on Orkney, thought to date back to 2000 BC;
A depiction of the Italian city of Pavia during an outbreak of plague in the seventh century;
the entrance to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp; the 'Green Vault' inside Dresden's royal palace, raided in November

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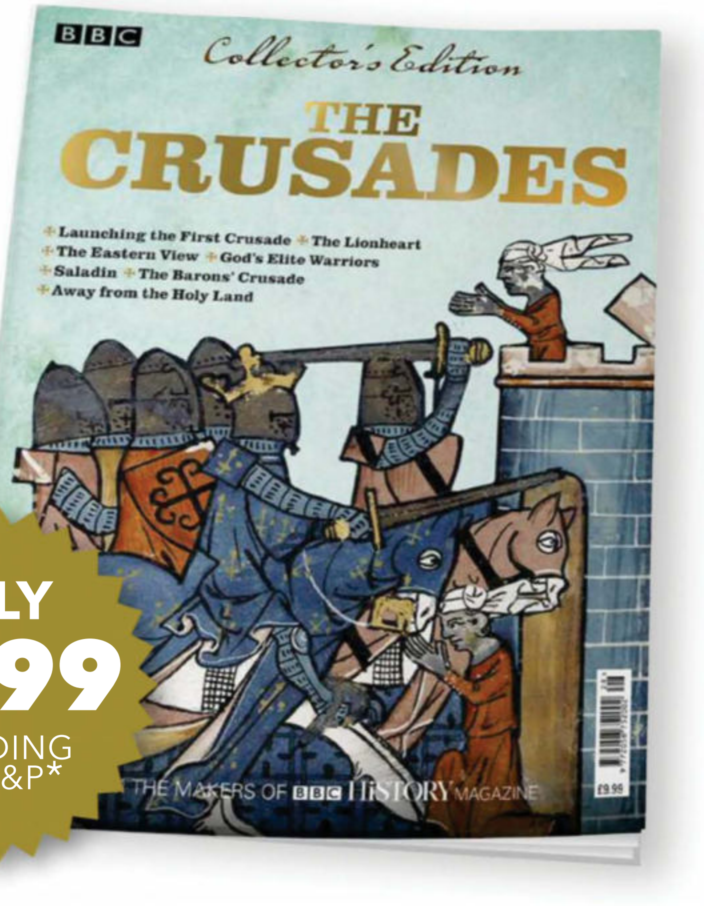
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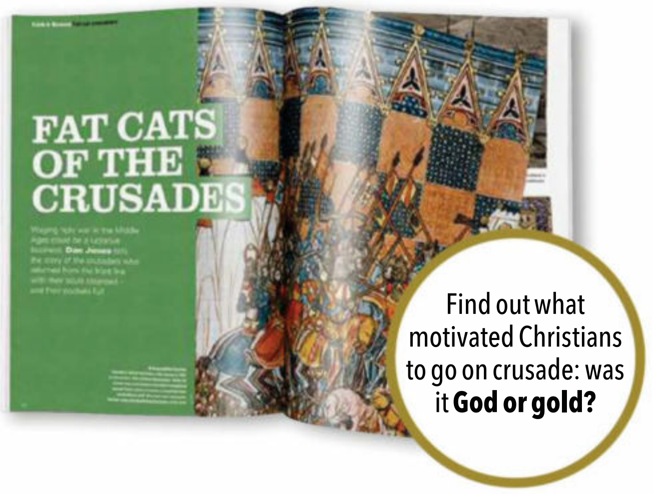
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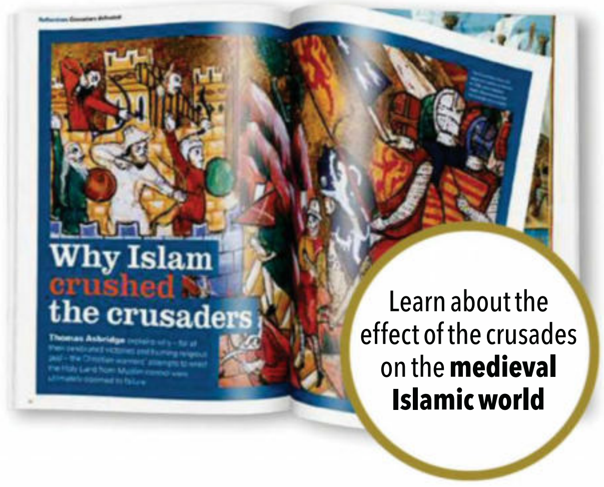
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MICHAEL WOOD ON…
CLIMATE CHANGE

"The climate emergency is the greatest crisis in human history"

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his books include *The Story of England* (Viking, 2010)

The start of a new decade is always a time for reflection, and what a crucial decade the 2020s will be. We now live in the Anthropocene, the human-made geological epoch that will leave its mark forever on our world, and the next 10 years will determine the future path of humanity on this small planet.

Our current climate emergency is the greatest crisis in human history. This central inescapable fact was driven home with terrible force in the new year as we saw Australia burning, from Darwin to Tasmania. Apocalyptic images showed blood red skies, as giant whirlwinds showered the landscape with burning ash, creating lightning storms like a vision from a medieval doom painting. Hundreds of millions of animals have died.

The broader trend of climate change that helped cause these events has been understood by scientists since the 1960s, and has become incontrovertible since the turn of the millennium. But climate change deniers serving the industrial-political establishment have continued to obfuscate the facts.

Reflecting on these recent disasters with friends in Sydney, I found myself musing on history. It was 250 years ago this spring that Captain James Cook, in the middle of his three-year first voyage on HMS *Endeavour*, reached the east coast of Australia. Sailing into Botany Bay, he landed at the sandy spit of Silver Beach, 10 miles south of the site of today's Sydney. Though the Dutch had already explored and mapped much of Australia's coastline, the British were the first Europeans to land in the east. There they first encountered indigenous people of the Gweagal tribe whose ancestors had been living on the continent for at least 40,000 years.

The Royal Society in London had lobbied King George III to back Cook's expedition, but its president, James Douglas, a man of true Enlightenment values, advised Cook and his companions to treat with "the utmost patience and forbearance" any indigenous people they might meet. "They are human creatures," Douglas argued, "the work of the same omnipotent author, equally under his care with the most polished European, perhaps being less offensive, more entitled to his favour. They are the natural and, in the strictest sense of the word, the legal possessors of the several regions they inhabit. No European nation has a right to occupy any part of their country or settle among them without their voluntary consent. Conquest over such people can give no just title; because they could never be the aggressors."

Nevertheless, shortly after landing at Botany Bay, Cook sailed north to what is now Cape York on the tip of Queensland. As the sun set on 22 August 1770, he declared the east coast of Terra Australis a British possession, and it was there that the first colonies would grow.

Today, Australia's population is just over 25 million. The majority are descended from British migrants, with just under 800,000 descendants of the original inhabitants. The nation's wealth is derived in large part from the mining and exporting of coal and minerals, especially to China. As is the case elsewhere, the creation of a profitable capitalist economy has taken precedence over the environment.

Meanwhile, the disturbing climatic trends that have been visible since the 1960s have become plain for all to see. If major concerted international action to combat climate change is not taken in the next few years, catastrophe will be unleashed on all living species.

Only political action can reverse the tide. But that is precisely the problem. From the US to Brazil and India to Europe, the last decade has seen the rise of rightwing populist governments across the world – administrations for whom the environment often barely registers as a priority. Future historians will no doubt view the rise of the populists as one of the key developments of the 2010s. And that development will have a crucial impact on our ability to win the climate battle in the 2020s.

When he landed on the Australian coast 250 years ago, Captain Cook saw a pristine world inhabited by human beings living in harmony with nature. That same year, as the industrial revolution took off back in Britain, the pioneering Hampshire ecologist Gilbert White recorded in his diary the ominous "Blue Mist" or "London Smoke" carried on the north-east wind: coal pollution that locals told him caused crop blight and diminished rainfall. The journey to this year's devastating bushfires had begun. H

Vast plumes of smoke rise from devastating wildfires in Victoria, Australia in early January

SHUTTERSTOCK

›› For more on climate history, read Brian Fagan's feature on the Little Ice Age on page 20

ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in February in history

11 FEBRUARY AD 55

Nero assassinates his stepbrother

Power-mad emperor poisons rival on eve of his 14th birthday

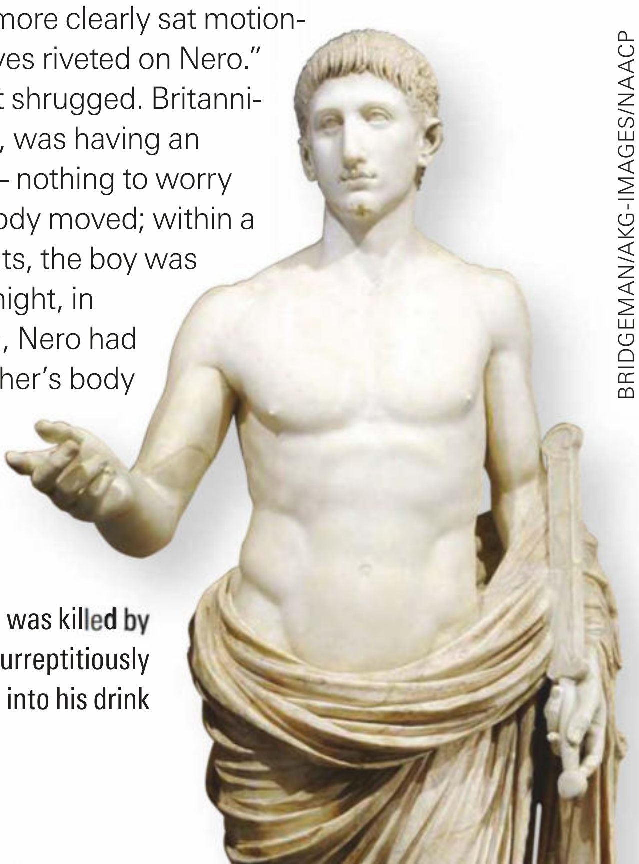
For Tiberius Claudius Caesar Britannicus, the evening of 11 February in AD 55 was always going to be special. The next day was his 14th birthday, which was widely regarded as the beginning of adulthood: a landmark event for any young Roman.

But Britannicus was not just any young Roman. He was the only son of the late emperor Claudius, who had died a few months earlier. The throne had passed to Britannicus's older stepbrother Nero, the son of Claudius's fourth wife, Agrippina. But Nero never felt secure. Britannicus, he decided, had got to go.

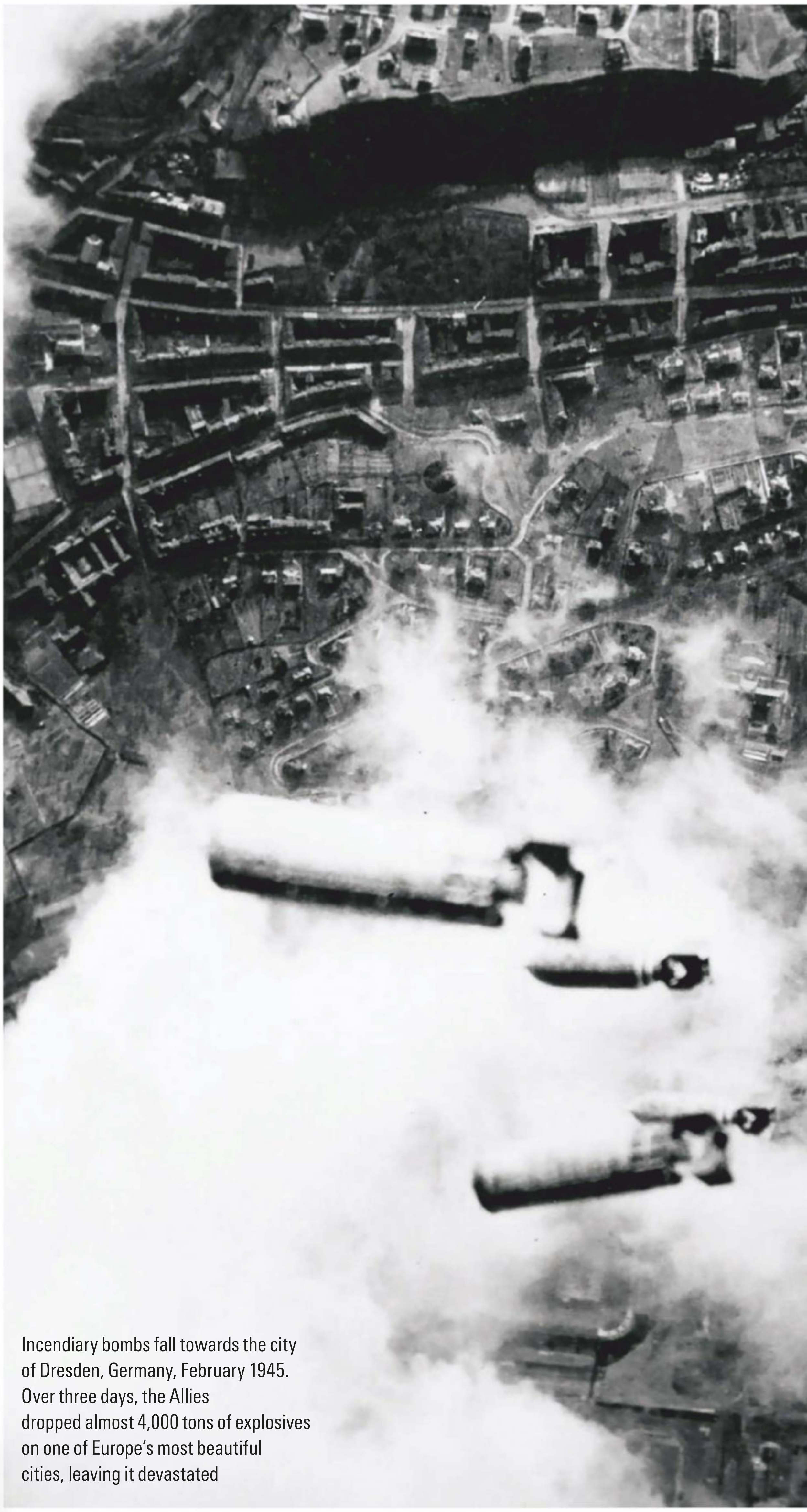
According to the Roman historian Tacitus, Nero engaged the services of a poisoner, Locusta, who had already been condemned to death. The emperor made his move on the night of 11 February, as Britannicus was enjoying his last meal before turning 14.

"A drink, still harmless, very hot, and already tasted, was handed to Britannicus," wrote Tacitus. "Then, when he declined it as too warm, cold water was poured in, and with it the poison, which ran so effectively through his whole system that he lost simultaneously both voice and breath. There was a startled movement in the company seated around, and the more obtuse began to disperse; those who could read more clearly sat motionless, their eyes riveted on Nero."

Nero just shrugged. Britannicus, he said, was having an epileptic fit – nothing to worry about. Nobody moved; within a few moments, the boy was dead. That night, in pouring rain, Nero had his stepbrother's body burned.



Britannicus was killed by poison surreptitiously poured into his drink



BRIDGEMAN/AKG-IMAGES/NAACP

Incendiary bombs fall towards the city of Dresden, Germany, February 1945. Over three days, the Allies dropped almost 4,000 tons of explosives on one of Europe's most beautiful cities, leaving it devastated

12 FEBRUARY 1909

Horrified by the rise of lynching, black activists and white reformers meet to form the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**, designed "to promote equality of rights and to eradicate caste or race prejudice" in the US.

13 FEBRUARY 1945

Dresden flattened by firebombing

Allies unleash 'nightmare' raid that kills 25,000

Dusk was falling when the first British aircraft took off for Dresden. It was the evening of 13 February 1945, and the Allies were poised to strike at Germany's seventh largest city, the only major industrial centre that had so far escaped a serious bombing raid.

Just before 10pm, the air-raid sirens sounded. Many of Dresden's residents were still running when the first bombs crashed down around them. Since the city had few public shelters, most people headed for their cellars. But there was no escape from the horror.

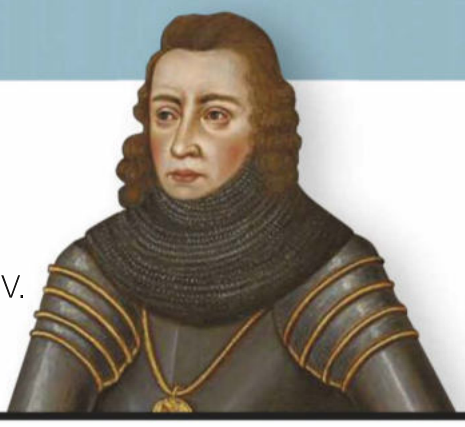
"It is not possible to describe," recalled one boy, Lothar Metzger. "Explosion after explosion. It was beyond belief, worse than the blackest nightmare. So many people were horribly burnt and injured. It became more and more difficult to breathe." Pushed out of the cellar by his mother, he saw the "burning street, the falling ruins and the terrible firestorm... We saw terrible things: cremated adults shrunk to the size of small children, pieces of arms and legs, dead people, whole families burnt to death... and fire everywhere, everywhere fire." He would never forget those things, he said, never.

The British and American raids lasted for three days, during which more than 1,000 planes dropped almost 4,000 tonnes of high explosive and incendiary bombs. Formerly one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, with a magnificent baroque townscape, Dresden became a vision of hell. Almost every major building was destroyed, while about 25,000 people were killed, many of them burned alive.

Afterwards, the Nazis tried to turn the bombing into a propaganda coup, falsely claiming that as many as 200,000 people had died – a lie that endured for decades. In London, Winston Churchill urged the RAF to concentrate on purely military objectives. But the head of Bomber Command, Arthur Harris, had no regrets. "I do not personally regard the whole of the remaining cities of Germany," he wrote, "as worth the bones of one British grenadier."

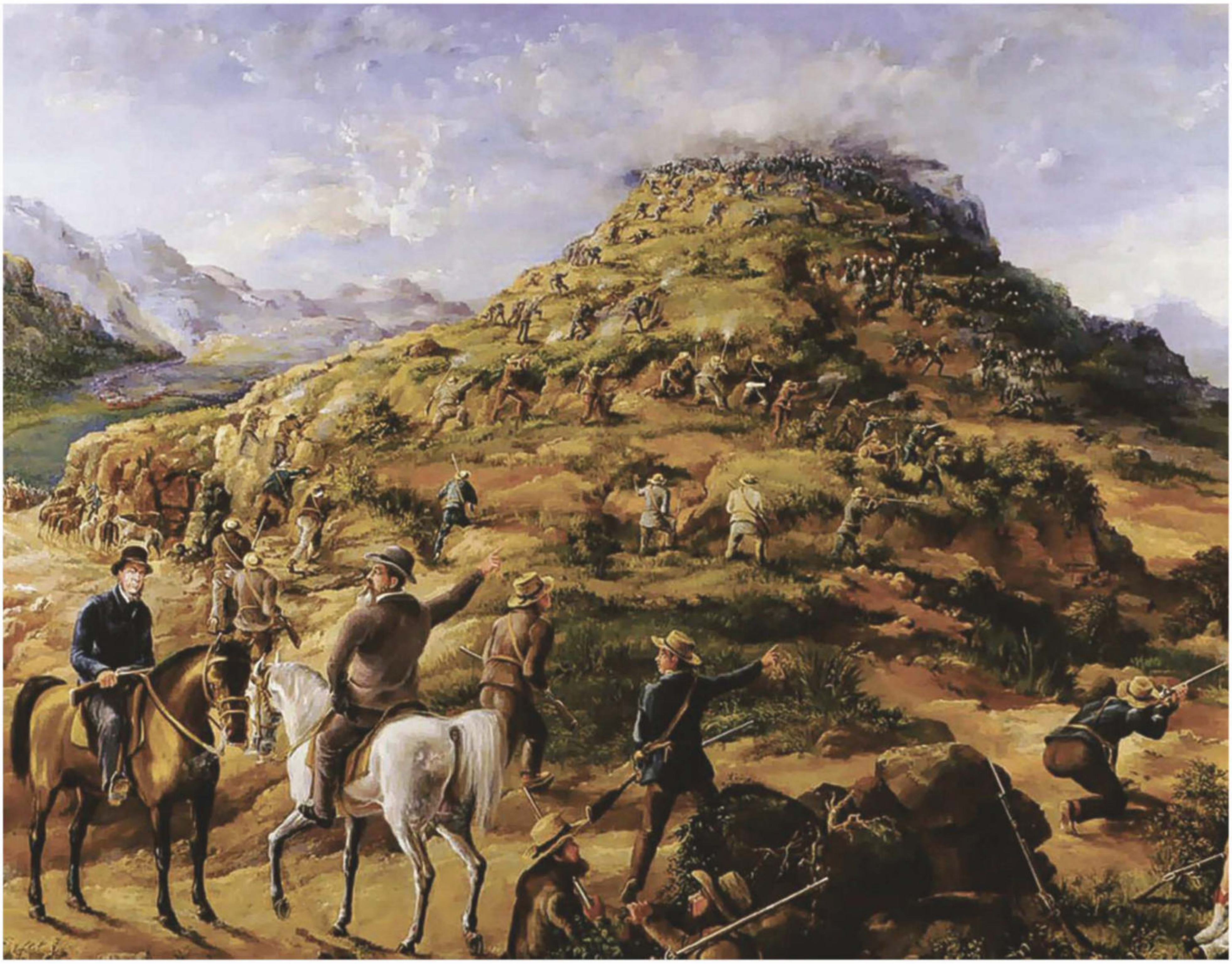
18 FEBRUARY 1478

After years of disaffection, **George, Duke of Clarence** (right) is convicted of "unnatural, loathly treasons" against his brother Edward IV. According to legend, he is executed by being **drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine**.



28 FEBRUARY 1904

In Lisbon, two dozen people cram into a room at the back of a Belém pharmacy to **set up a sporting club** which – unlike the clubs so popular with English residents – will be for Portuguese natives only. They call it Sport Lisboa, but it is better known today as **Benfica**.



An 1881 representation of the battle of Majuba Hill. Sir George Colley led the British troops up a slope overlooking the enemy camp, but it was a walkover for the Boers

MUSEUM OF AFRICA/BRIDGEMAN

27 FEBRUARY 1881

British routed at Majuba Hill

Surprise attack on rebels in First Boer War goes badly wrong

"It was the first time I had been under fire," wrote Thomas Fortescue Carter, "and I confess that the sensation was not a pleasant one."

Carter had signed on as a war correspondent to cover the rebellion of the Boer-dominated Transvaal, in southern Africa, against the British empire. But after fighting broke out in December 1880, the campaign went badly. Both sides were pretty small, with battles involving hundreds rather than thousands. But the Boers had the best of it, and in mid February 1881, negotiations for a ceasefire began.

Then events took a twist. With hundreds of reinforcements newly arrived from the south, the British commander, Sir George Colley, decided to mount a surprise attack on the Boers that would force them to agree to Britain's terms. On the night of the 26th, his troops climbed Majuba Hill, above the main Boer camp. Then, at first light, the firing began.

As Colley had anticipated, the battle was a walkover – but for the wrong side. As the Boers charged up the hill, taking cover in the long grass, British resolve faltered. Suddenly, wrote young Thomas Carter, men started running. "Five, six, seven, eight more men broke from the ranks in front of us and fled," he wrote. "The rest wavered, and… the whole lot went rushing wildly over us down into the bottom of the basin." And as Boer gunfire echoed around the hill, Carter admitted, "it was not long before I was on my feet and running with the rest".

By now, Colley was dead, shot by a Boer sniper as he tried to rally his men. He was one of 92 killed, while dozens more were captured, among them Thomas Fortescue Carter. For the British, it was a disaster; at the ensuing peace conference, they were forced to recognise the independent Transvaal Republic. But they never forgot Majuba. And two decades later, they got their revenge.

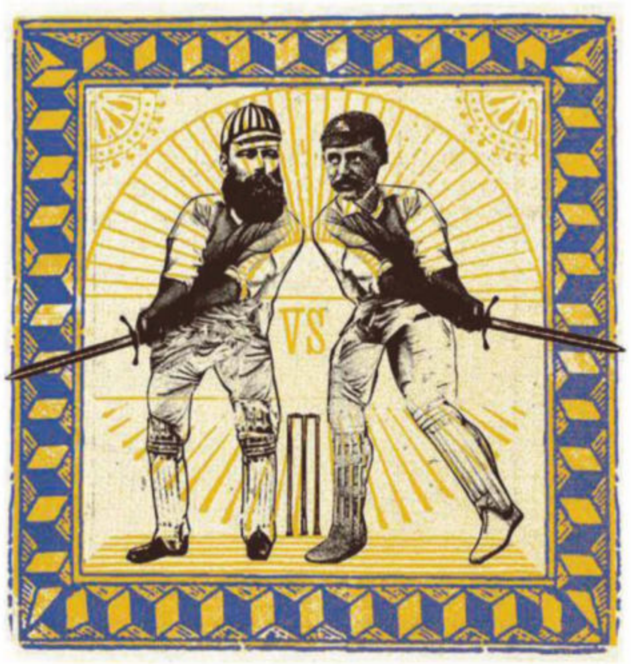


ILLUSTRATION BY **BEN JONES**

8 FEBRUARY 1879

Cricket match slips into carnage

Players lash out with stumps as Australian crowd invades pitch

The place is Sydney, Australia, the date 8 February 1879, and in the warm sunshine, thousands have gathered to watch New South Wales play cricket against a touring English 11. What could be better? The gentleman's game, the stuff of fair play and unswerving sportsmanship! On the other hand, this was Australia against England.

The trouble began in the late afternoon, when one of the home batsmen was adjudged to have been run out. Encouraged by local gamblers, the crowd roared with disapproval. The two captains – Dave Gregory of New South Wales and Lord Harris for the English – began to argue. Then the mood turned ugly.

A few hundred, then thousands of people surged onto the pitch. In the melee, somebody hit Lord Harris with a club or a whip. One of his teammates, an amateur boxer, weighed in, but had his shirt almost ripped from his back. Two of Harris's teammates grabbed stumps for protection and escorted their captain from the field. But on their way into the pavilion, they were pushed and jostled by hundreds of spectators; by the time they had reached safety, they were covered with cuts and bruises.

To the Australian press, the riot was a moment of utter shame. It was a "national humiliation", declared the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which thought it would remain "a blot upon the colony for some years to come". H

Dominic Sandbrook is a historian, author and broadcaster. His latest book is *Who Dares Wins: Britain, 1979–1982* (Allen Lane, 2019)

ALAMY

WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER…

The 1870 Education Act: the first step towards schooling for all

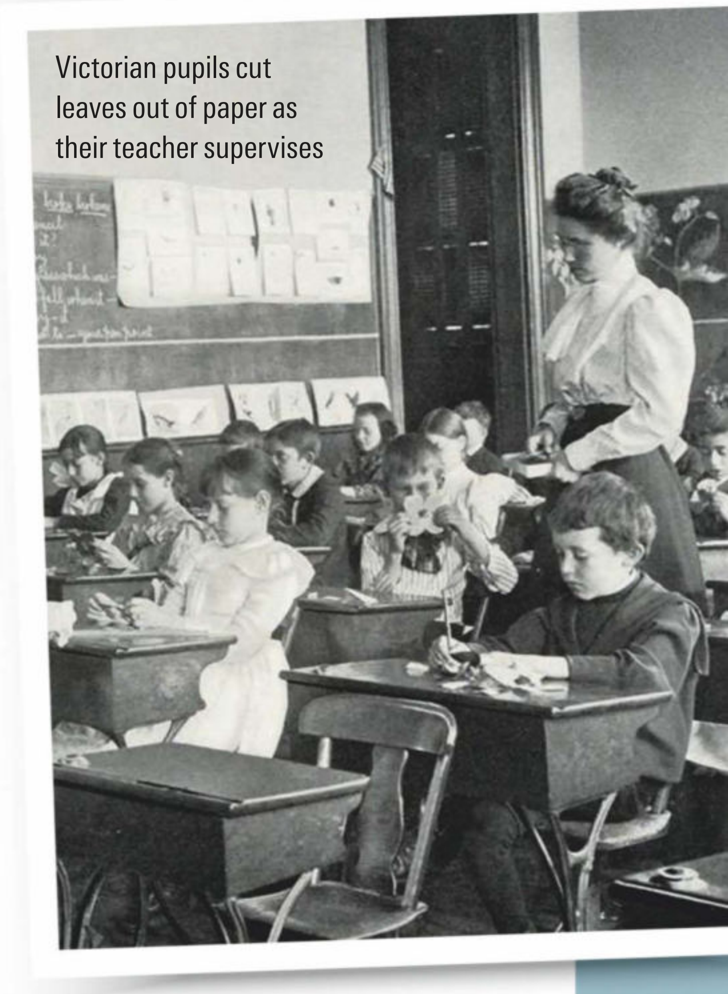
BY **DR SUSANNAH WRIGHT**

The 1870 Education Act was introduced into the House of Commons 150 years ago this month. More than any prior or subsequent legislation, it brought about a system of mass education in England and Wales. For the first time, the state became responsible for the elementary (primary) schooling of all children of ages 5–10. Calls for more schools for more children, and better oversight, had come much earlier – think Charles Dickens. But by the late 1860s, pressures had mounted. Extensions of the electorate, most recently in 1867, along with the fear of falling behind international competitors, and moral panics about juvenile delinquency and popular unrest – especially in 'slums' – were all cited as reasons for more schools. The system of elementary schools that emerged was a complex mix of older church schools and new, church-administered and part state-funded ones, or fully state-funded ones, filling the gaps.

With greater state intervention came politicisation and controversy. Party politics in the late 19th century was bound up with religion (at that stage, nearly always meaning Christianity). In the elections for the more than 1,500 local school boards set up by the 1870 Act, the Tories became the Church party, demanding religious education based on Anglican doctrine, and Liberals the Nonconformists or Bible party, wanting just Bible reading. But the three Rs filled much of the late 19th-century elementary schoolday, and influenced the levels of funding awarded under the much-maligned system of payment by results.

> **"Fears of juvenile delinquency and popular unrest were cited as reasons for more schools"**

But centralisation didn't mean a lack of local or individual agency. School boards offered space not just for the main political parties and Christian denominations, but also – quite radically – for 'worker representatives' and women. And the new schools were not always welcome. Parents could complain about school fees (until they were abolished in the 1891 Elementary Education Act) and lost household earnings. Pupils truanted, sometimes with parental consent, which became increasingly obvious after 1880, once attendance became compulsory and subject to monitoring. Or they went on strike, protesting against overcrowded classes and results pressure. If the state wanted to educate the masses, the masses didn't always want the education on offer, and sometimes voted with their feet.



Victorian pupils cut leaves out of paper as their teacher supervises

The 1870 Act has cast a long shadow. A mix of school types, party debates and arguments about religious education are still with us today. And pupils still truant and go on strike. The will to resist attempts at mass education might still be there too. H

Dr Susannah Wright is senior lecturer in education studies at Oxford Brookes University. She is the author of *Morality and Citizenship in English Schools* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)

HIDDEN HISTORIES

DAVID OLUSOGA explores lesser-known stories from our past

“It was more shocking than anything in the pages of the gothic novels”

There is a sub-genre of English literature known as Tasmanian gothic. It consists of sensationalist novels, such as Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life*, set in the penal colonies of the Australian island that until 1856 was known as Van Diemen's Land. It was to that island that around 40 per cent of all the convicts transported from Britain in the 19th century were sent. So bad was the reputation of Van Diemen's Land that it inspired not merely gothic novels but also a petition, sent to Queen Victoria in 1854 by the island's free settlers, in which they requested that the island be renamed Tasmania to distance itself from its dismal past.

There is, however, nothing on the pages of any of the gothic novels more shocking than what happened in September 1822, when eight convicts managed to escape from the remote penal station at Macquarie Harbour – the very lowest circle of Van Diemen's Land's prison hellscape. Among the escapees was Alexander Pearce, a labourer from County Monaghan who had been sentenced to transportation in 1819 for "the theft of six pairs of shoes".

At Macquarie Harbour, prisoners were forced to work as lumberjacks in the vast forests that surrounded it, and it was while sawing lumber that Pearce and seven others made their bid for freedom. Having escaped their guards they headed east, in the hope of reaching the so-called settled area and stealing a ship.

But to reach the eastern half of the island, they had to cross the mountainous temperate rainforests of the west, where the temperatures were just as cold as any Pearce had known in his native Ireland. The fugitives entered the dark and icy woods of Van Diemen's Land equipped with a little food and a single axe. After a week, they were beginning to starve.

It was at this point, according to Pearce, that one of the convicts said: "I could eat a piece of man." The next day, another escapee, Robert Greenhill, stated that he would also be willing to kill and be the first to eat human flesh, so long as the others later partook and thus incriminated themselves as well.

Greenhill selected a victim, who was killed with the axe as he slept. Another man helped Greenhill dismember the body and they both ate. The others, including Pearce, were at first repulsed, but the next day, when their hunger overcame them, they accepted a share of flesh. At this point, unsurprisingly, two of the party abandoned the group and attempted to make their way back to Macquarie Harbour.

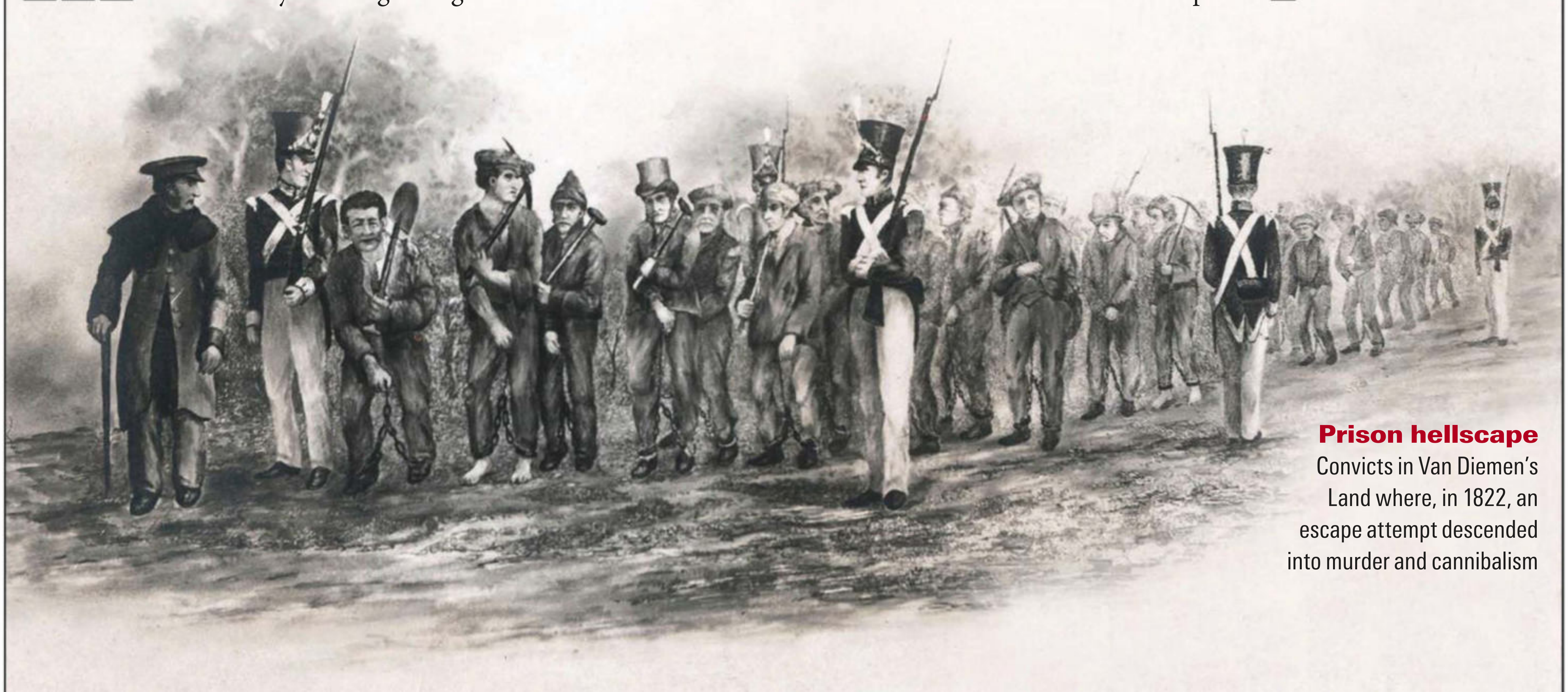
The remaining five pushed on over the mountains, Greenhill keeping hold of the axe. When hunger overwhelmed them again, Greenhill killed another man. Two more were killed over the following weeks, until only Greenhill and Pearce remained.

For days they walked on, neither daring to sleep. When eventually Greenhill dozed off, Pearce grabbed the axe and murdered him. Taking some of his victim's flesh, Pearce reached the settled area but was later caught.

In custody, Pearce confessed both to having killed Greenhill and to eating the flesh of his comrades. Yet the magistrate presumed he was lying and the punishment Pearce received was to be sent back to Macquarie Harbour. But in November 1823 he escaped again, along with another convict, Thomas Cox.

On reaching a river, Pearce discovered that Cox could not swim, grew angry and butchered him. When Pearce was again caught, he confessed once more to murder and cannibalism, and this time his account was believed. Sentenced to hang, Alexander Pearce's last statement before the gallows was to report: "Man's flesh is delicious. It tastes better than fish or pork."

David Olusoga is professor of public history at the University of Manchester, and the presenter of several BBC documentaries



Prison hellscape

Convicts in Van Diemen's Land where, in 1822, an escape attempt descended into murder and cannibalism

ALAMY

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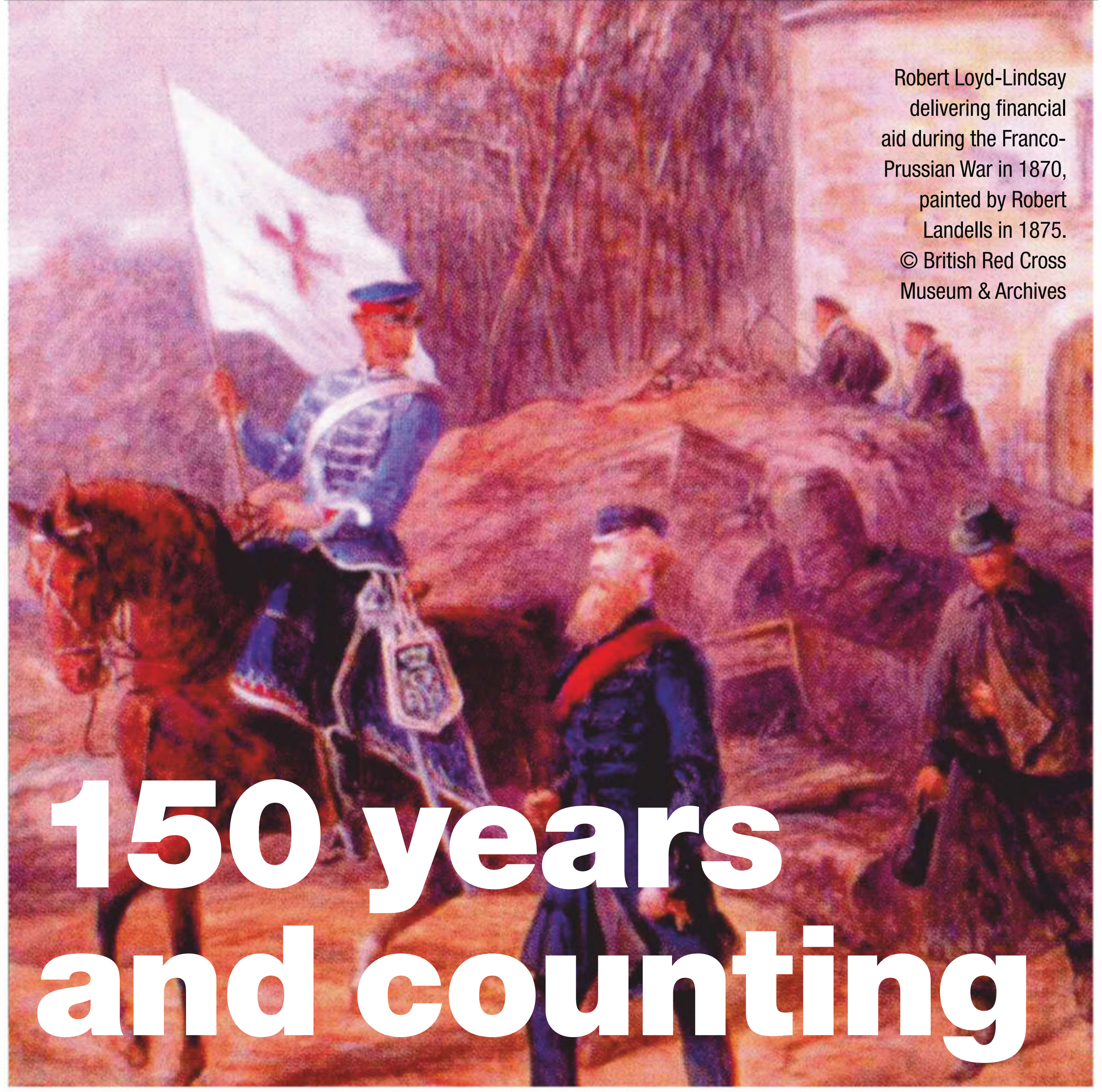
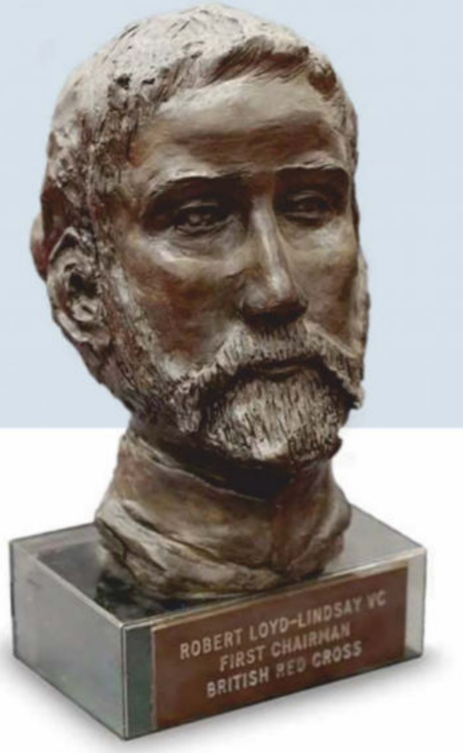


Robert Loyd-Lindsay delivering financial aid during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, painted by Robert Landells in 1875. © British Red Cross Museum & Archives



Bust of Robert Loyd-Lindsay by Mollie Dunn (1995). From the British Red Cross Museum collection

MEHZEBIN ADAM, CURATOR OF THE BRITISH RED CROSS MUSEUM & ARCHIVES, EXPLORES BOTH THE ORIGINS OF THE BRITISH RED CROSS AND ITS LASTING LEGACY

Having witnessed the horrors of the Crimean War, Robert Loyd-Lindsay believed it was important for Britain to play a role in alleviating the anguish that would inevitably arise following the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in July 1870. He maintained that aid should be offered to all those suffering, regardless of which nation they were fighting for.

This flag is believed to be the same flag used during the Franco-Prussian War, 1870. From the British Red Cross Museum collection

At a public meeting held in August, a resolution was passed. This was the beginning of the British Red Cross, initially named the National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War. Shortly after, Loyd-Lindsay wrote a letter appealing to the public, which resulted in a staggering sum of nearly £200,000 (the equivalent of £24 million today) being raised by the end of the following month.

The funds helped to supply essential food, blankets, clothing and medical equipment, as well as send surgeons and nurses to assist the sick and wounded. Loyd-Lindsay was personally involved in distributing £40,000 from the funds raised equally between both the French and German lines.

In the painting above, Loyd-Lindsay is shown following the Red Cross flag. The symbol of the Red Cross was honoured by soldiers and patients from both sides. Under the flag, people were defined and united by their humanity – not by the war they were fighting.

LEAVE A LEGACY

The work begun by the British Red Cross in 1870 is still as important in 2020. Upholding Loyd-Lindsay's legacy, the charity now fulfils the same mission of providing assistance without discrimination, but on a global scale.

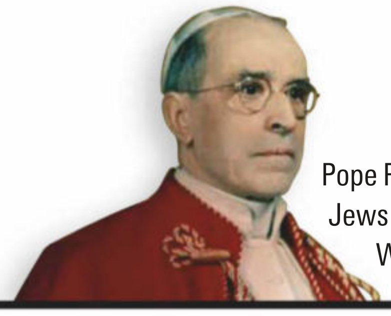
It's thanks to the generosity of the charity's supporters that it can always be ready to help those in crisis, whether they're on the other side of the world or on your street. By leaving a gift in your will, you will help ensure that the British Red Cross can continue to support vulnerable people, for the next 150 years and beyond.

THE FREE WILL SCHEME

The British Red Cross is offering a free will writing service, where you can have your will written or updated for free. There is no obligation to include a gift to the charity. However, if you choose to do so, your legacy will live on in the help you provide to those who need it the most.

For more information about supporting the British Red Cross with a gift in your will and the Free Will scheme, visit redcross.org.uk/freewill or call 0300 500 0401

LETTERS



Pope Pius XII saved thousands of Jews during the Second World War, says reader Andrew Gray

LETTER OF THE MONTH

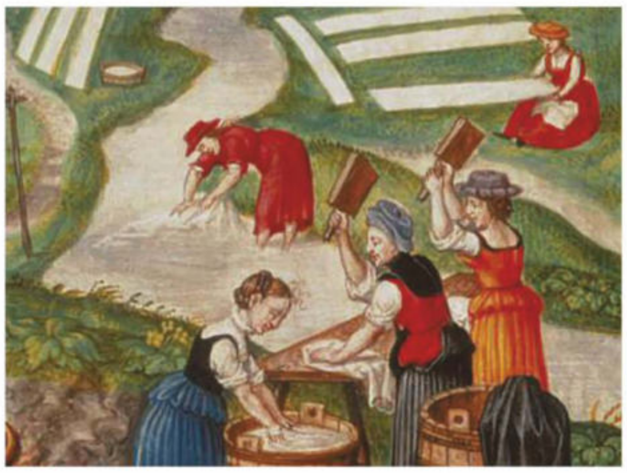
Clean-living ancestors

I was quite surprised to read Katherine Harvey's interesting article about medieval cleanliness (*The Not So Stinky Middle Ages*, January) – not by its content, but that it was necessary to write about the subject at all. Most animals try to keep themselves clean, so why not human beings?

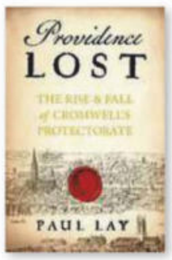
To think that our ancestors were not clean is surely a kind of arrogance, which reminds me of a conversation I had with a doctor recently. I told him that, in the 1890s, an autopsy indicated that an ancestor had died of a particular cancer. His reply was: "Oh, they knew nothing then!" Of course they did. Not having today's technology and knowledge did not make our ancestors stupid, any more than not having modern clothes, washing machines and detergents made them dirty!

However, in the 19th century, especially, with the upsurge of the industrial revolution, along with grinding poverty for many, standards of cleanliness undoubtedly slipped; it is difficult to keep clean if one is living on the streets, or in a dosshouse, and doesn't have the wherewithal to buy decent clothes and soap. But it is wrong to assume that, just because people lived in 1800, or 1500, or 1200, they would not bother to keep themselves clean. Such articles are a welcome addition to the magazine.

Keith Longmore, Ashwellthorpe



Women do the laundry in the 16th century. It is arrogant to assume that our forebears didn't pay attention to their hygiene, writes Keith Longmore



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **Providence Lost: The Rise and Fall of Cromwell's Protectorate** by Paul Lay. You can read our review of the book on page 76

Empire records

The Christmas 2019 issue of *BBC History Magazine* was excellent, with lots of interesting, thought-provoking articles.

The highlight for me was Will Bowden's *After the Empire*. I wonder if this article could be made compulsory reading for the so-called experts on TV who keep telling us that in AD 410 (or 409) all the Romans in Britain – whether governors, centurions, tax collectors, stonemasons or farm labourers, from the highest to the lowest – headed for the ferry terminal at Dover, leaving the British at the mercy of the barbarians.

It is very much the case that, if you hear something often enough, however inaccurate it may be, it becomes accepted as fact.

Brian Tait, Scottish Borders

'Calamity' Carter

The last sentence in Dominic Sandbrook's description of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – "After all, they had almost ruined his Christmas" – was completely inappropriate (*Anniversaries*, Christmas). President Carter is one of the world's great humanitarians, and the thought that his Christmas was more important than peace and justice would be complete anathema to him.

Gordon Woods, Oxford

Dominic Sandbrook replies: I have long thought that the best verdict on Jimmy Carter's presidency came from a labour leader allied to the Democratic party: "I consider his abilities mediocre, his actions pusillanimous and his administration a calamity for America's working people," the labour leader said. "Since an obelisk soaring 555 feet into the air symbolises the nation's admiration and respect for George Washington, it would seem the only fitting memorial for Jimmy Carter would be a bottomless pit."

Papal fallibility?

Nigel Jones in his review of *Priests de la Resistance!* (*Books*, January) states that "for every Christian rightly praised here [for aiding resistance to the Nazis in wartime Europe] there were others – not least in the heart of the Vatican – who actively helped the Nazis achieve their evil ends". I wonder whether Mr Jones is aiming at Pope Pius XII? If so, it is only fair to point out that Pope Pius was an anti-Nazi who actively aided the German resistance in their contacts with the British and French governments in 1939–40. Pius was also responsible for the saving of thousands of Jews in Italy, when he authorised religious houses and Vatican state extraterritorial properties to shelter Jews from their persecutors. Here, the writ of the Nazis and their Italian Fascist allies did not have authority.

In parenthesis, one might add that when the chief rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli, converted to Catholicism in 1945, he took as his baptismal name Eugenio Maria. This was in honour of a man who had assisted him and his family in the war years: Eugenio Pacelli, the birth name of Pope Pius XII.

Andrew Gray, Edinburgh

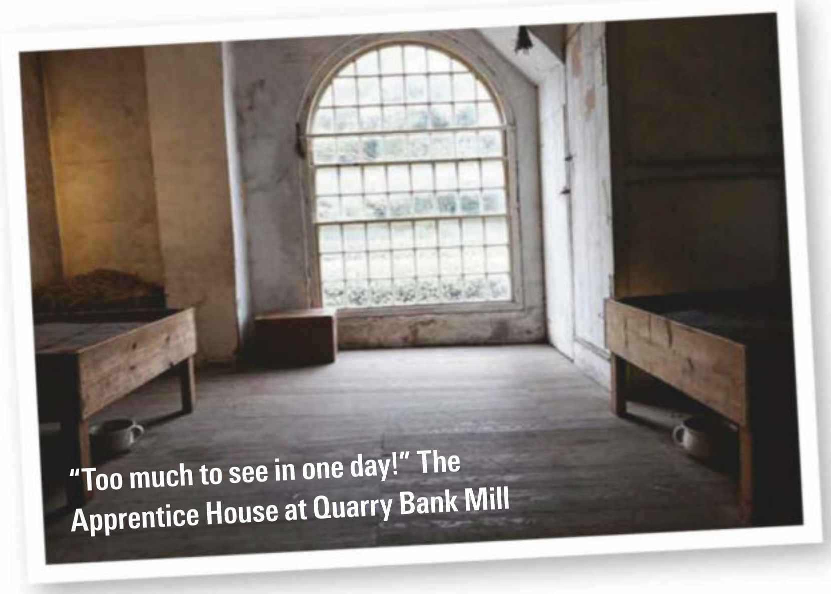
Nigel Jones replies: Pope Pius XII had an ambiguous role in the Second World War, with many historians claiming he could have done much more to oppose Nazism. However, my comment was actually referring to those priests and Vatican officials who operated the notorious 'rat line' after the war, which provided false identities for hundreds of wanted Nazi war criminals – including Adolf Eichmann, Josef Mengele and Klaus Barbie – and spirited them to safety in Latin America.

What a brill mill

I was pleased to see the article about Quarry Bank Mill in Cheshire in the January issue (*Explore*). I live five minutes away from this estate and have visited for 30 years. My children loved the Apprentice House – particularly the leeches that lived there!

Hannah Greg, the wife of the mill's owner, played an important part in the apprentices' lives, and although I know conditions were hard, many chose to stay at the mill and live in the local village at Styal. It remains a thriving village, with a flourishing school, churches and a community shop,

BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY



"Too much to see in one day!" The Apprentice House at Quarry Bank Mill

A Victorian family and their maids pose on the doorstep of their house in 1875. But gloomy faces didn't necessarily mean unhappy sitters, argues Tina Rowe

GETTY IMAGES

and descendants of mill workers still live there now. There is too much to see in a day!
Penny Fisher, Cheshire

The whole picture

It is a shame that in his interesting article on the smile in Victorian photographic portraiture (*Smile! You're on Camera*, January), Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones describes those not smiling as "posing miserably and stiffly… or staring absently into the middle distance".

We cannot know whether these people felt miserable, nor whether they were staring "absently". They may just have been concentrating and absorbed by the process.

As Professor Llewellyn-Jones points out, in the early days of photography, the time taken did mean an unsmiling pose was probably easier to maintain, but it is a cliche to suggest that the experience was negative. The relatively quick process would have produced an image of some significance to the sitters. Posing for the magical medium could as easily have been a thrill as the chore and bore suggested.
Tina Rowe, Somerset

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abc Jan–Dec 2018 **94,628**

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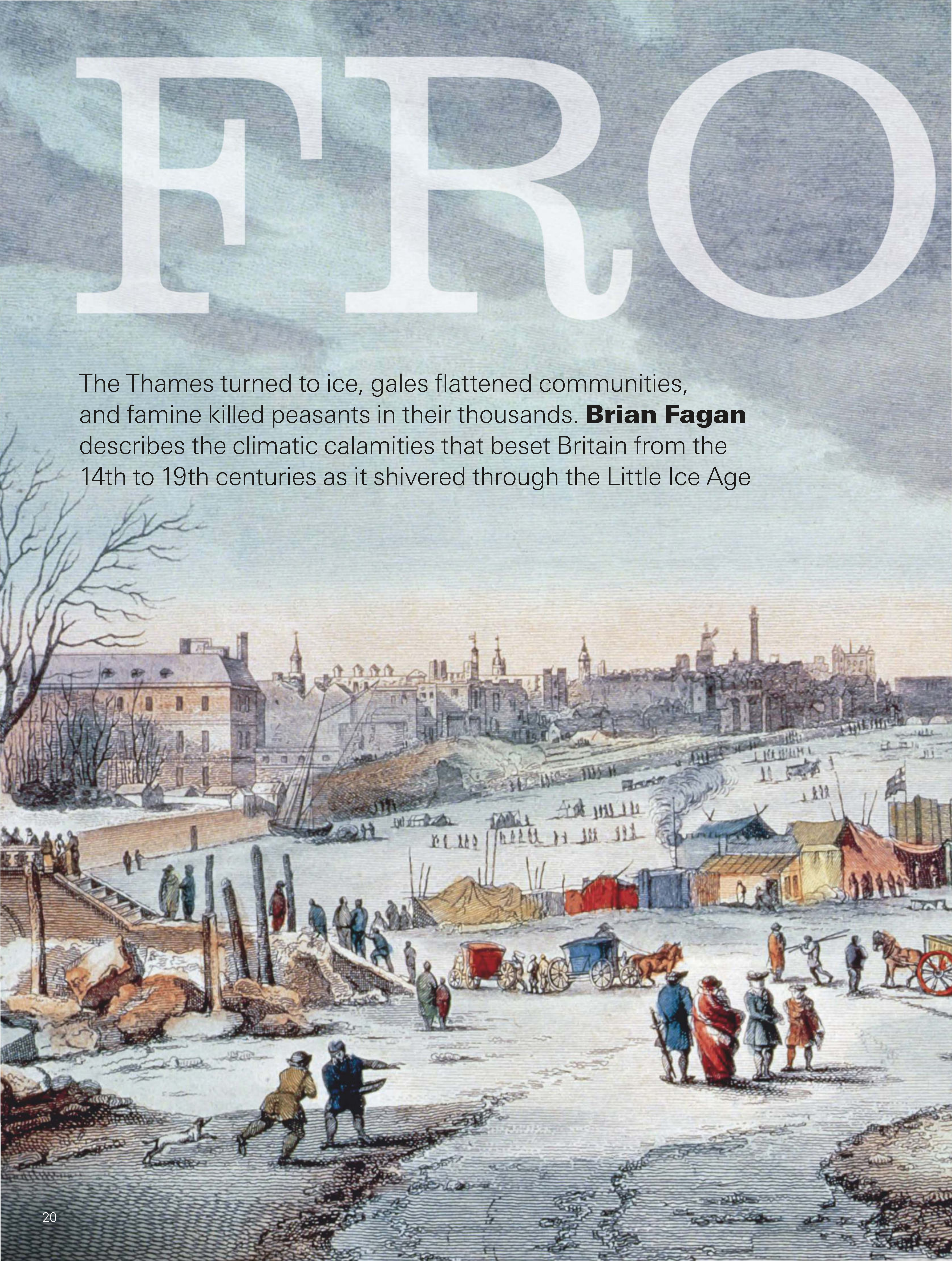
FRO

The Thames turned to ice, gales flattened communities, and famine killed peasants in their thousands. **Brian Fagan** describes the climatic calamities that beset Britain from the 14th to 19th centuries as it shivered through the Little Ice Age



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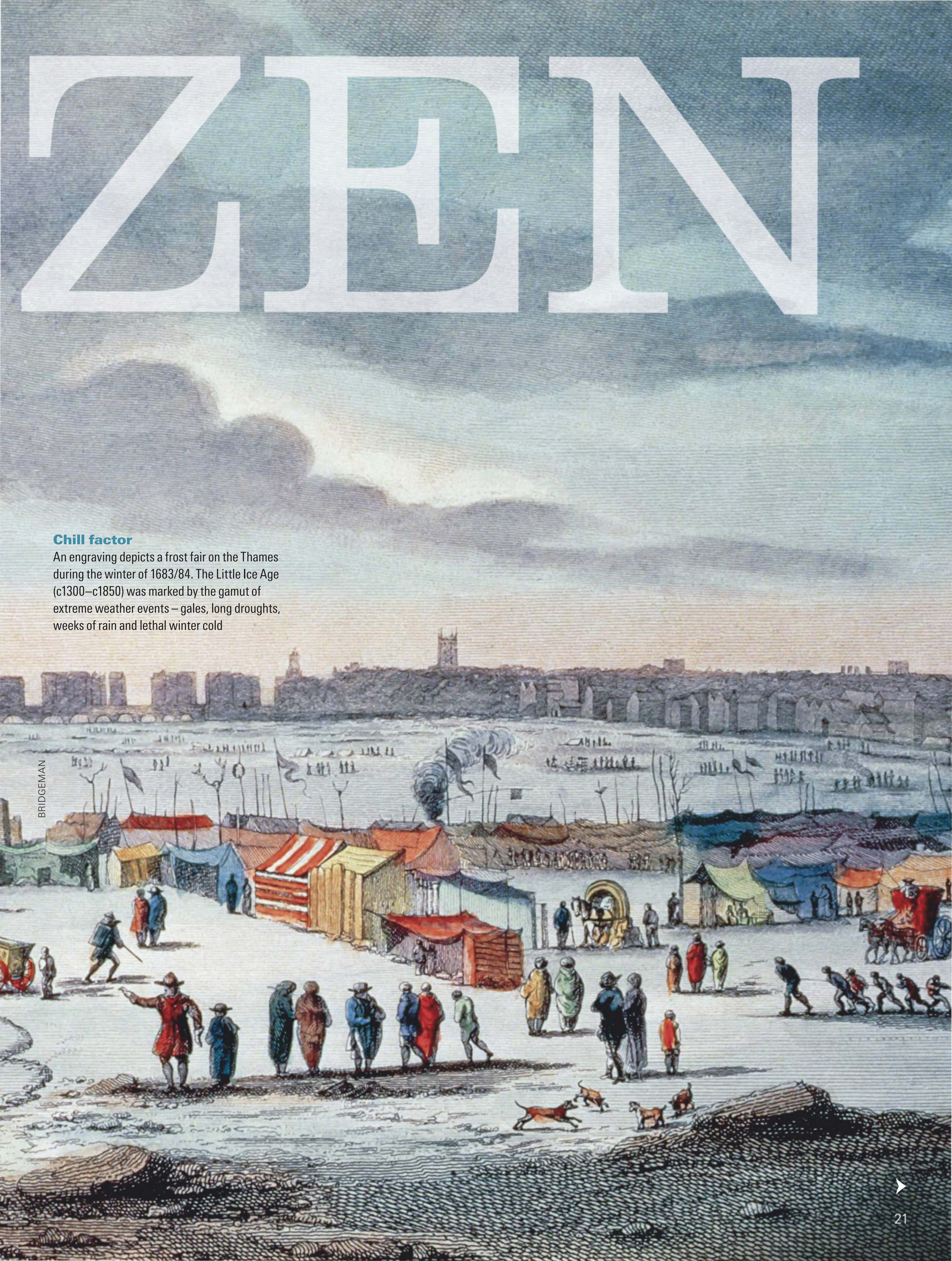


Chill factor
An engraving depicts a frost fair on the Thames during the winter of 1683/84. The Little Ice Age (c1300–c1850) was marked by the gamut of extreme weather events – gales, long droughts, weeks of rain and lethal winter cold

BRIDGEMAN

When winter enveloped Britain in its icy embrace in January 1684, temperatures didn't just dip, they plummeted. "Frost . . . more & more severe, the Thames before London was planted with bothes [shop stalls] in formal streets as in a Citty," recorded the diarist John Evelyn. "The very seas so locked up with yce, that no vessels could stir out, or come in."

The cold snap that John Evelyn reported was no flash in the pan. Far from it. Frost fairs in the heart of London, ruinous crop failures, cattle and sheep freezing to death in the fields… all occurred with increasing regularity as Britain shivered in what we now call the Little Ice Age.

Today, this period of weather is often associated with a 200-year timeframe stretching from the mid-17th to mid-19th centuries. But the climate had begun changing more than 350 years before John Evelyn described stranded ships in the frozen Thames – and the result wasn't always extreme cold.

A period of unusually warm, mostly dry, summers was brought to an abrupt end in 1315 when an unprecedented deluge began shortly after Easter. Sheets of rain descended on the sodden countryside. Freshly ploughed fields became shallow lakes. Corn and oat crops were decimated. Preachers declared that the Lord was angry and that divine vengeance had descended on the land.

With vast rainstorms sweeping across the country, livestock perished by the thousand. Only pigs flourished in the wet, but the herds were decimated when people turned from cereal to pork. The 'great dying of beasts' persisted into the 1320s, causing a severe shortage of manure.

As food became increasingly scarce (the bishop of Winchester's lucrative grain mill, we're told, "did not grind for half a year on account of the flood"), the consequences for England's peasants were catastrophic. Tens of thousands died of starvation and famine-related diseases. The suffering continued for seven years before more normal harvests brought some relief.

Fields turned into shallow lakes. Corn and oat crops were decimated. Preachers declared that the Lord was angry

It was at this moment of death and tumult that the Little Ice Age dawned across the world. Temperatures fell globally by about 0.6ºC relative to the average temperature between 1000 and 2000, although there were brief intervals where it was colder still. As a result, stable climatic systems were disrupted as extreme weather events – storms, weeks of rain and long drought cycles, as well as unrelenting cold – became commonplace.

Global cooling

A glacial geologist, François Matthes, first employed the term 'Little Ice Age' in 1939. He used it in an informal way, but, as these usages often do, it became a rigidly defined period in the climatic literature, beginning around 1300 and ending shortly after Victoria ascended the British throne in 1837. This chronology has been hotly debated in recent years, but one fact is widely accepted: the pendulum of climate change rarely paused during this period, with grievous economic consequences. Fluctuations in grain prices are an oft-quoted barometer of cold summers and, during the Little Ice Age, prices oscillated wildly – to as much as 88 per cent above normal levels in hungry years.

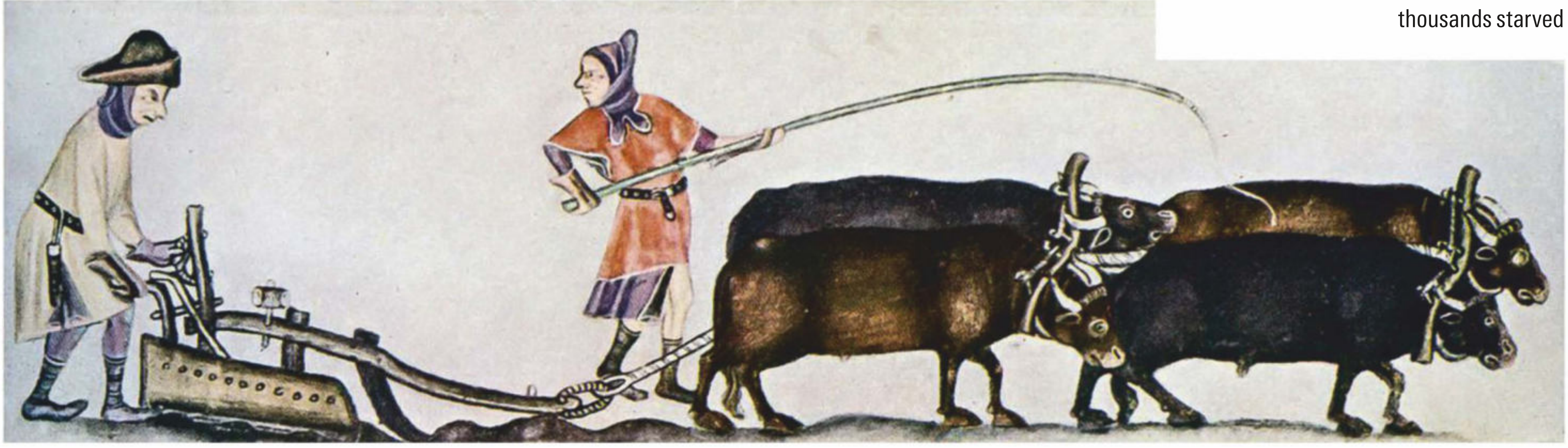
As to why this global cooling occurred, nobody knows for certain – but scientists have identified three possible culprits over the years. The first is the seesaw of atmospheric pressure that links a prevalent high over the Azores and a low over Iceland. When pressure is high over Portugal and the Azores, and low over Iceland, winter temperatures are mild and rainfall is plentiful in northern Europe. Flip the pressure gradient, however, and temperatures fall dramatically.

The second potential culprit is the sun. Until recently, many scientists believed that a dramatic reduction in sunspot activity could have contributed to falling temperatures. We know that sunspots became rare in the 17th century – and that this phenomenon coincides with a dimming of the sun and a reduction of solar energy reaching Earth. However, the very latest research suggests that variations in solar activity play only a small role in the Earth's climate.

Sophisticated climatic modelling and studies of periods of volcanic activity have added a third potential villain to the climatic mix. In 1257, a volcanic eruption of Mount Samalas, in what is now Indonesia, released massive amounts of volcanic sulphate particles into the atmosphere. Both human records and tree-ring samples show widespread summer cooling over the northern hemisphere in the years following the eruption – with terrible results. In London alone, up to 20,000 people perished from famine in the ensuing food crisis; in St Albans, the dead lay rotting in pigsties, on dunghills and in the muddy streets.

The onset of the Little Ice Age may be linked to an unusual 50-year period when four large volcanic eruptions such as this sent

At the elements' mercy
Peasants plough the land in an illustration from c1325–40. But, for all their efforts, when vast rainstorms drenched England, thousands starved



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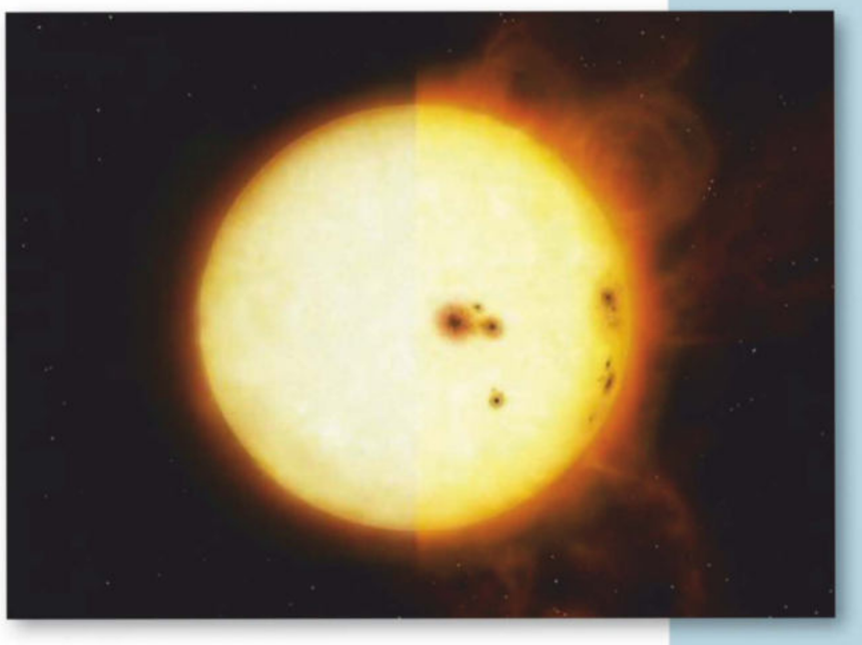


In the spotlight A composite image of two halves of the sun. The right half shows a period of high solar activity, with numerous sunspots. It used to be argued that a period of few sunspots (left half) contributed to the Little Ice Age

enormous quantities of volcanic ash into the atmosphere, devastating subsistence farming.

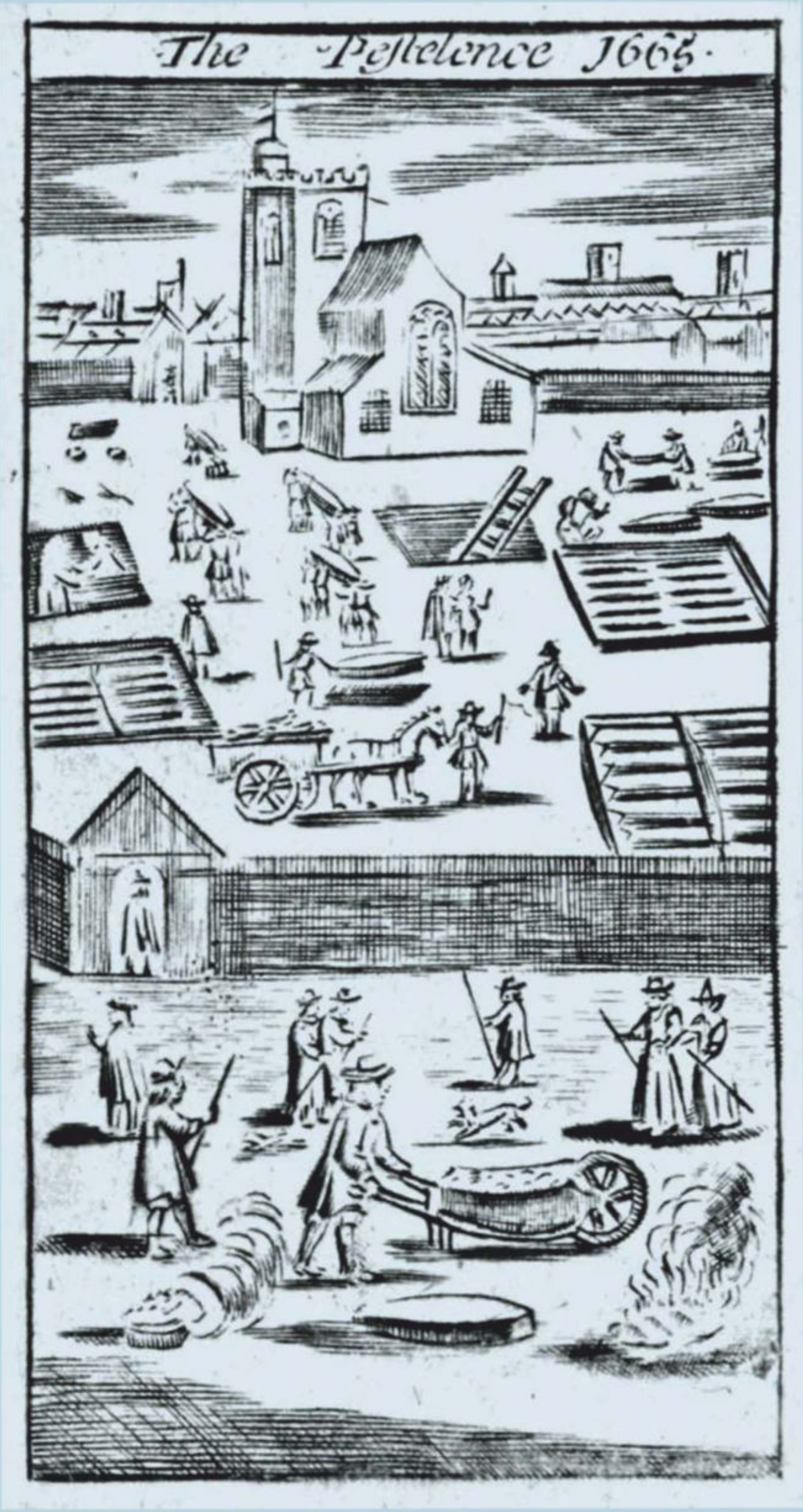
Such jolts to the world's climatic network sent temperatures tumbling. But they also had the opposite effect, sparking heatwaves and dry winds. And it was at the height of the Little Ice Age that London suffered its most notorious fire.

In 1665, bubonic plague killed at least 57,000 people, but subsided during the cold winter of 1666. An intensely hot summer followed, turning the city into a tinder box. On 2 September 1666, during a period of dry north-easterly winds, fire broke out in the royal baker's house during the small hours. The blaze spread rapidly, soon enveloping the first of numerous churches burned to the ground. London's lord mayor distinguished himself by observing that it was nothing: "Pish, a woman might piss it out," he declared. He was delusional. Diarist Samuel Pepys described the blaze "as only one entire arch of fire… of above a mile long… A horrid noise the flames made, and the crackling of houses at their ruin." The destruction wrought by the Great Fire of London was epochal: 13,200 houses were destroyed in more than 400 streets or courts; 100,000 people were rendered homeless out of a population of 600,000.

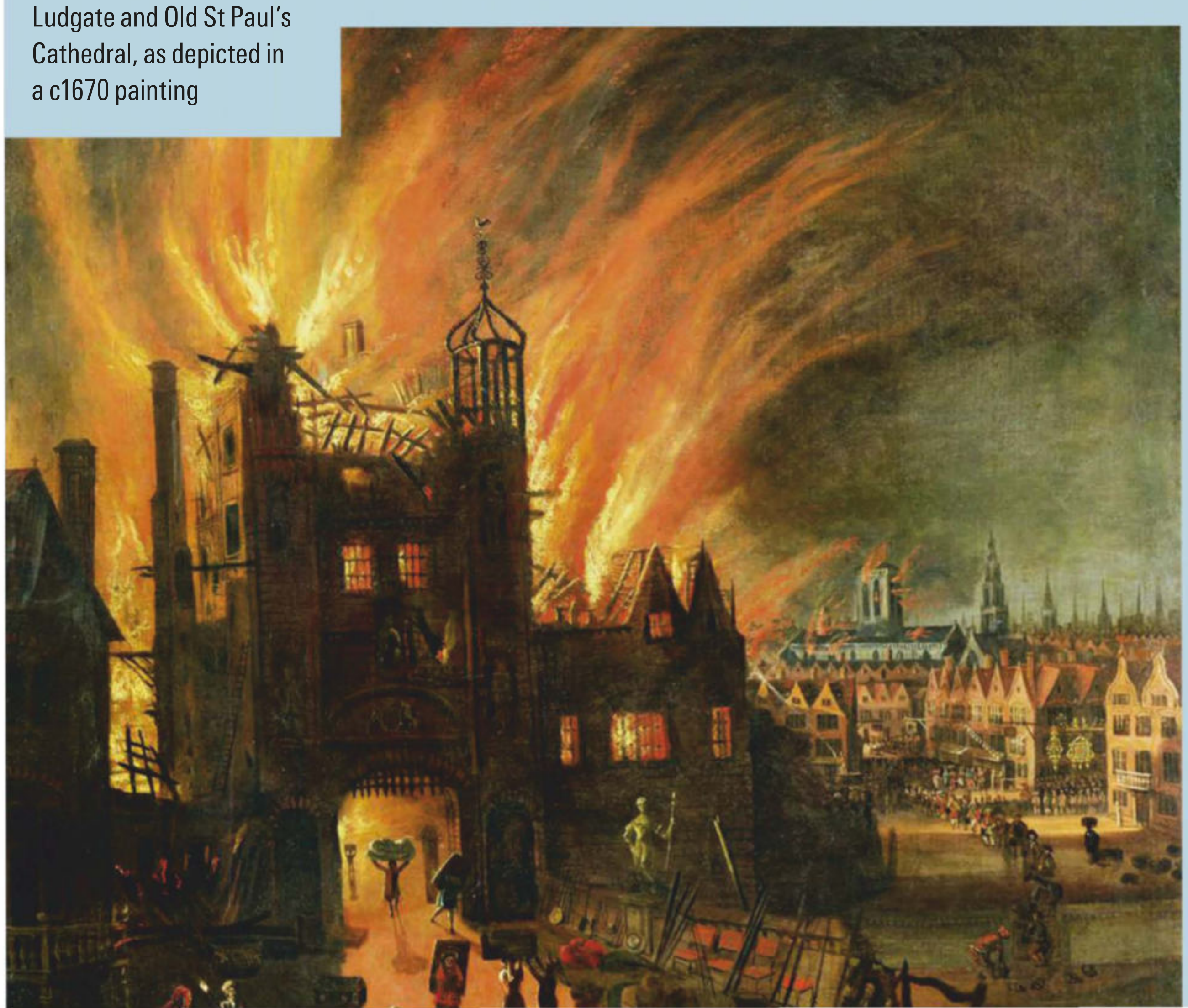
No one blamed the north-easterly winds and dry heat for the disaster. Instead, the catastrophe was placed at the feet of the Lord. The 10th of October was proclaimed a Day of Humiliation to crave God's forgiveness "that it would please him to pardon the crying sins of the nation".

Death and destruction

But God, it seems, wasn't listening. Throughout the 17th century, Britain was battered by a succession of intense gales – ones that, as the residents of the Culbin estate in north-eastern

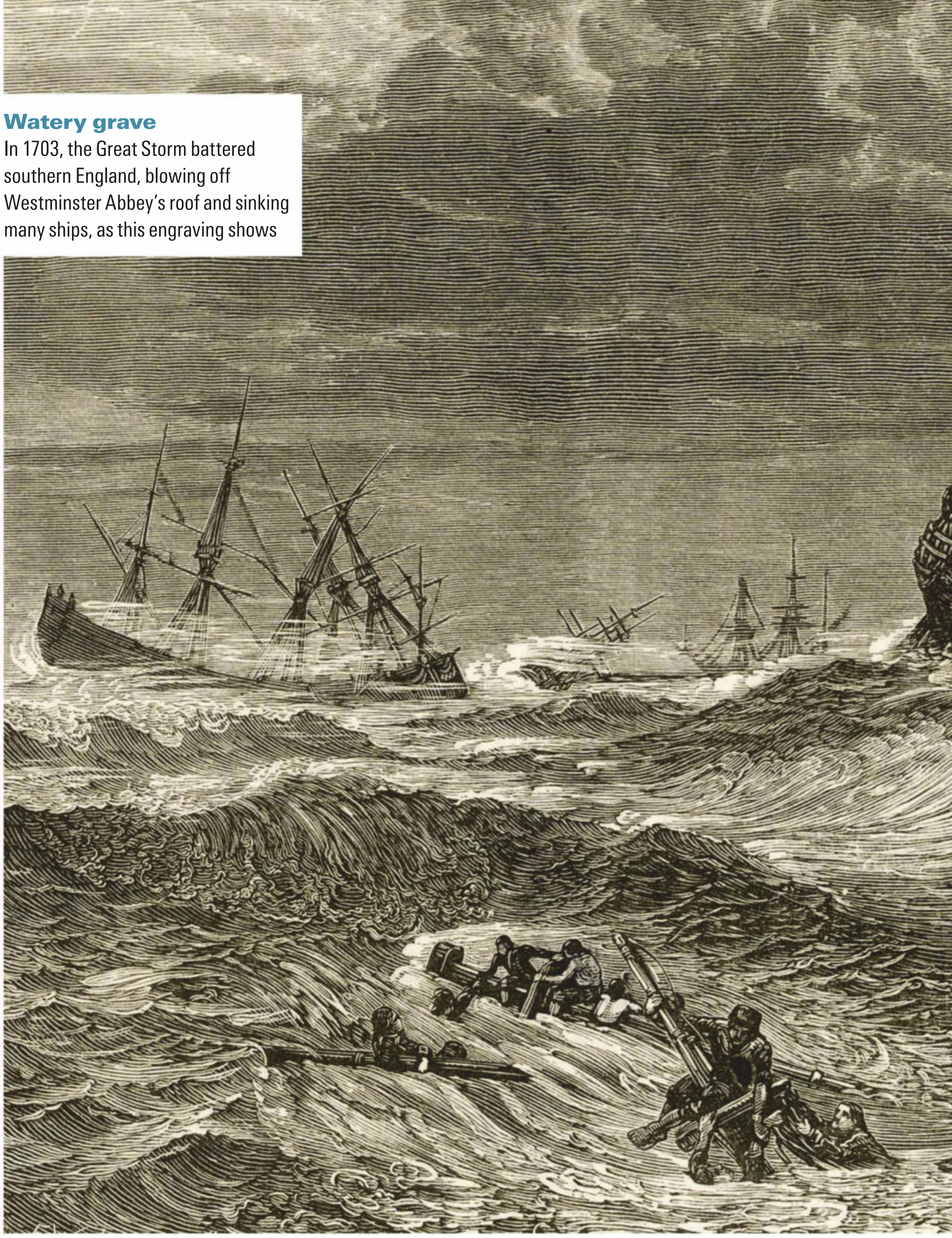

The Pestelence 1665.

Devastation Plague victims are buried in an image illustrating an entry in Samuel Pepys' diary, entitled 'The Pestelence 1665'. The outbreak subsided during the cold winter of 1666



London's burning Following a long, hot summer and fanned by dry winds, the Great Fire of London rips through Ludgate and Old St Paul's Cathedral, as depicted in a c1670 painting

SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY/GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN



Watery grave
In 1703, the Great Storm battered southern England, blowing off Westminster Abbey's roof and sinking many ships, as this engraving shows

Scotland were to discover – visited death and destruction on rich and poor alike.

Culbin was a thriving estate during the 17th century, protected by coastal sand dunes. The local farmers grew wheat and a form of barley in a sheltered location teeming with salmon. And as a sign of his growing prosperity, the local laird, Alexander of the Kinnaird family, built himself an imposing mansion.

Yet, no sooner was the mansion completed, in 1694, than a savage northerly gale burst from the North Sea onto the 1500-hectare estate. For 30 hours, storm winds and huge waves tore at the protective coastal sand dunes. Smothering clouds of dust and sand cascaded onto the sheltered fields inland and overwhelmed croft and mansion alike. The next day, nothing could be seen of 16 farms, all buried under 30 metres of loose sand dune. As for the laird, he became a pauper overnight. Nineteenth-century visitors found themselves walking on "a great sea of sand rising as it were in tumultuous billows". Thick stands of Scots and Corsican pines planted in the 1920s now mantle the dunes – Britain's largest coastal forest.

The great storm

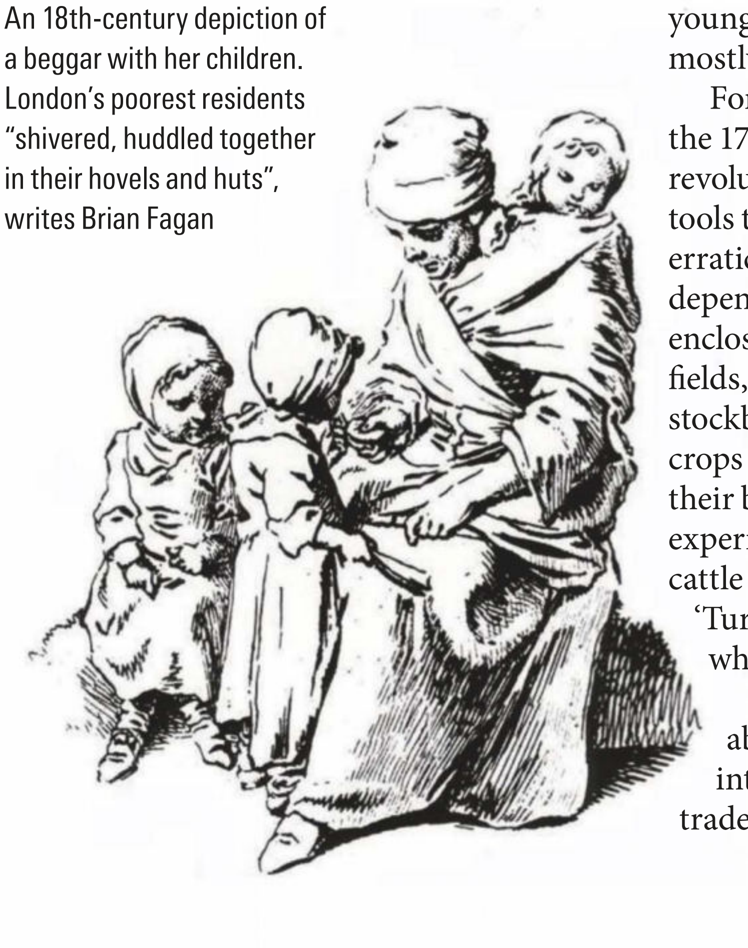
The gale that battered Culbin was truly ferocious but not even that could rival the great storm that swept through southern England on 7 December 1703. When the author Daniel Defoe consulted his barometer that morning, it was so low that he assumed his children had fiddled with it. He was wrong. Within hours, hurricane-force winds were cascading tiles through London streets and killing passers-by. Some 2,000 chimneys collapsed; Westminster Abbey's lead roof blew off. Defoe and his family cowered at home "rather than to meet most certain destruction in the open garden". Enormous waves battered the ornate and newly constructed Eddystone lighthouse off Plymouth. The keepers and their fellow workers perished when the structure toppled.

Bitterly cold winters continued until the 1730s, when there were eight winters as mild as those of the 20th century. But the cold returned with a vengeance after 1739, when "much corn, and the greatest part of barley was lost", and English grain prices rose by 23.6 per cent above the average.

As ever, it was the poor who suffered most. Few could afford coal or firewood. They shivered, huddled together in their hovels and huts, and sometimes froze to death. The *London Advertiser* wrote that "such swarms of miserable objects as now fill our streets are shocking to behold". Many were driven from parish to parish without any public relief. Edmund Burtt, an English gentleman travelling in Scotland in 1741, commented on young children "miserable objects indeed… mostly overrun with… distemper [diarrhea]".

For all the intense suffering, throughout the 17th and 18th centuries an agricultural revolution slowly but surely gave Britain the tools to better withstand the buffeting of its erratic climate. The population no longer depended on subsistence agriculture, and enclosure policies created larger farms and fields, where landlords combined cereals and stockbreeding. They planted cold-resistant crops – using fodder crops like clover to keep their beasts fat during the winter – and experimented with selective breeding of cattle and sheep. One landlord, Viscount 'Turnip' Townshend, rotated turnips with wheat and barley to feed his animals.

Just as critical to Europe's growing ability to meet the challenges of the intense cold was the growth in global trade networks. These allowed grain to be



Pitiful existence
An 18th-century depiction of a beggar with her children. London's poorest residents "shivered, huddled together in their hovels and huts", writes Brian Fagan

MARY EVANS/AKG-IMAGES

Mount Tambora's eruption in south-east Asia helped bring besieging cold to Britain in 1816, the 'Year Without Summer'

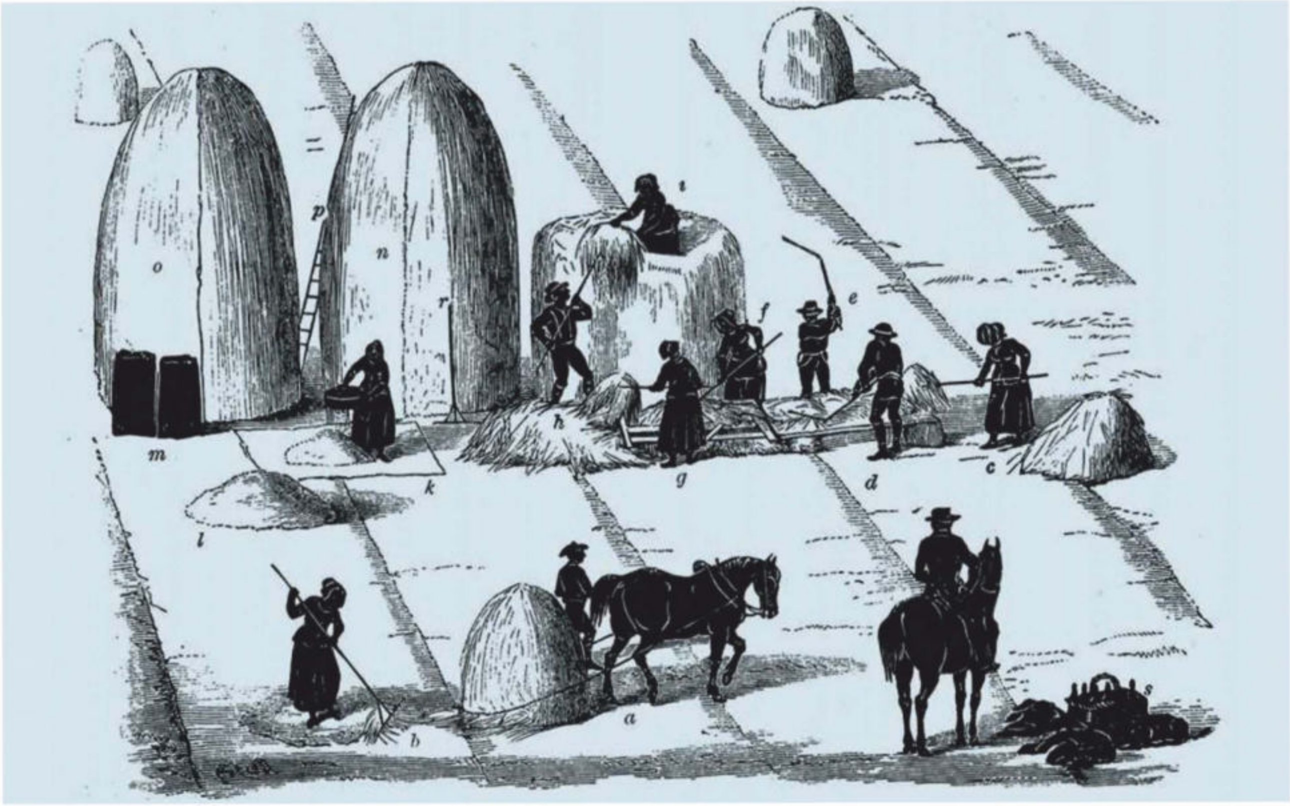
exported and imported across the continent and for raw materials to be sourced from distant lands.

At the end of the 17th century, the two most prominent players on the global stage were England and the Netherlands. During the coldest snap of the Little Ice Age, both countries extended their reach around the world through conquest and expanding trade networks – not to mention utterly ruthless political subjugation.

Yet for all their growing wealth and influence, they weren't totally shielded from the destructive impact of the Little Ice Age. The eruption of Mount Tambora in south-east Asia in 1815 was part of a renewed burst of volcanic activity that brought besieging cold to Britain and much of western Europe. The following year – the 'Year without a Summer', when Mary Shelley came up with the idea for *Frankenstein* while sheltering from inclement weather – is often said to have marked the end of the Little Ice Age. However the cold persisted into 1892, when hundreds of Londoners died of exposure.

The Thames froze for the last time in 1895, and there has been consistent warming ever since. The cause is easy to discern – an inexorable rise in the use of fossil fuels such as coal, which darkened London skies and polluted the atmosphere with ever-rising greenhouse gasses.

But, while human activity can affect the climate, one cannot simply invoke the climate as the 'cause' of human events, large or small. Relationships between the weather and the economic, political and social systems that people use to structure their lives are complex, sometimes even counterintuitive. This is true today – and it was certainly true of Britain during the Little Ice Age.



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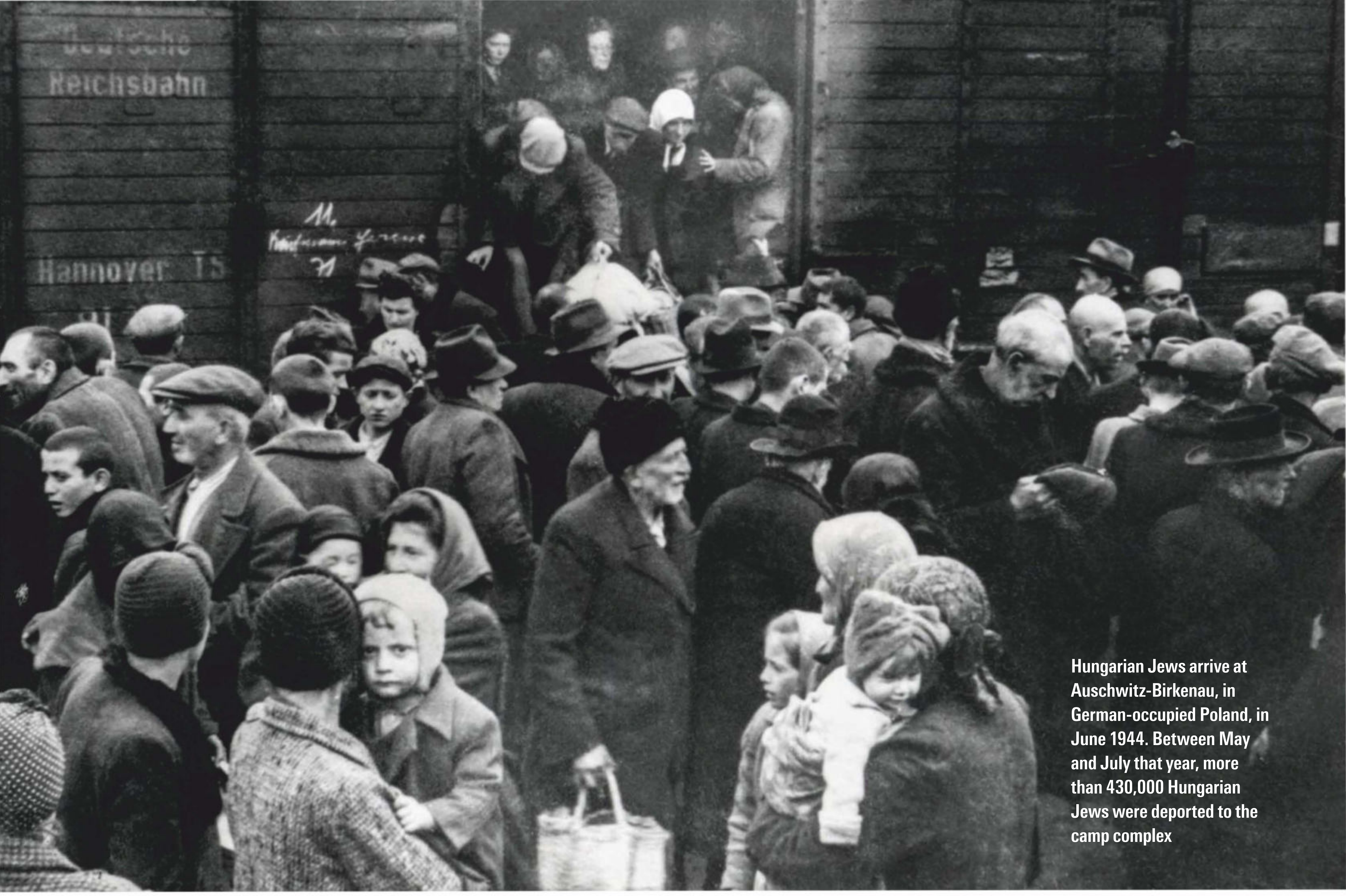
Spreading the risk An 1855 drawing shows people threshing rye grass for seed, part of a system of crop rotation that made Britons less susceptible to famine

Brian Fagan is distinguished emeritus professor of anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. A revised version of his book *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History* was published by Basic Books in December 2019



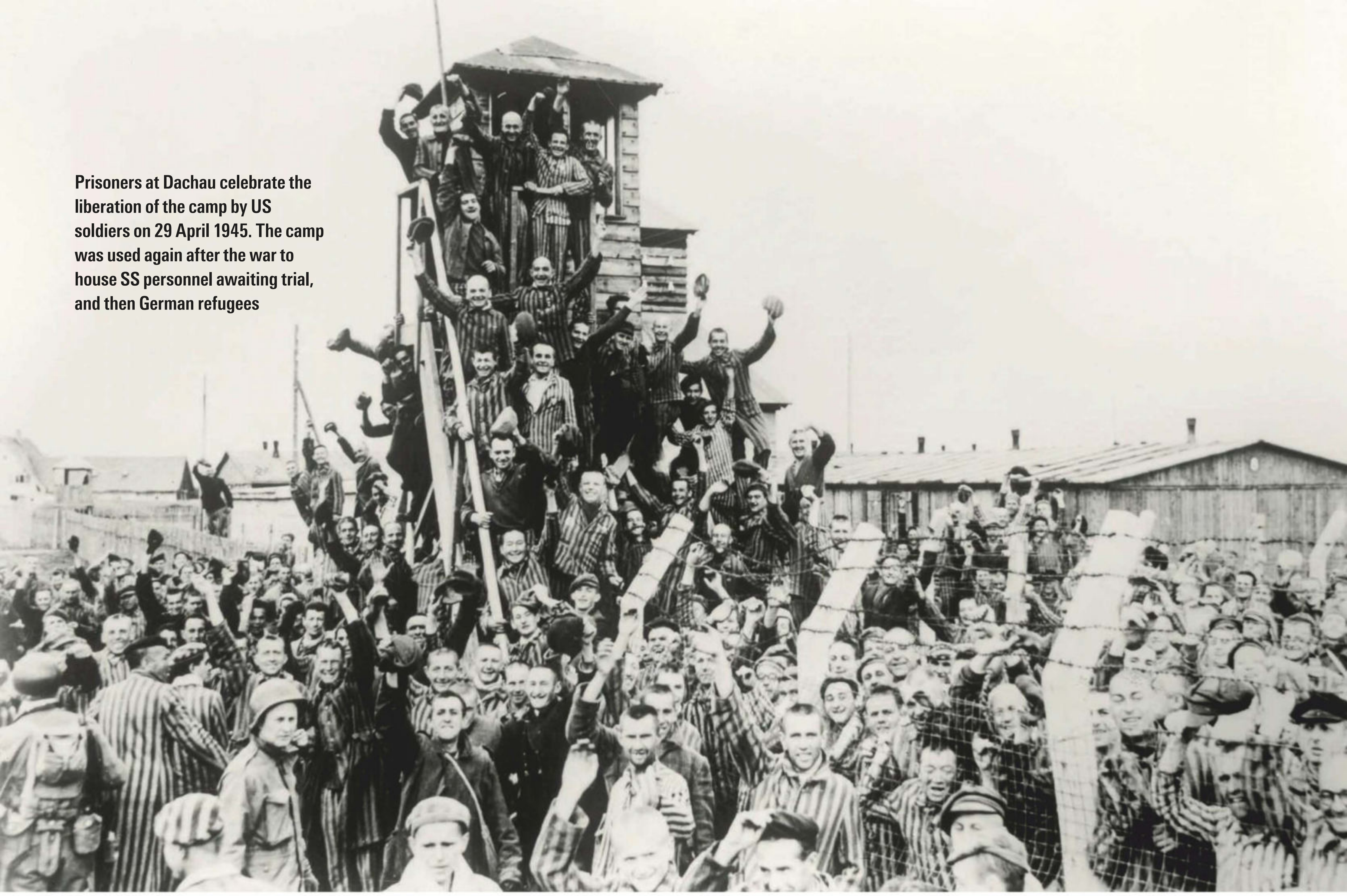
Hungarian Jews arrive at Auschwitz-Birkenau, in German-occupied Poland, in June 1944. Between May and July that year, more than 430,000 Hungarian Jews were deported to the camp complex

WHEN THE LIBERATORS CAME

Complements the BBC's **Holocaust programmes**

BBC

As the Allies fought their way into the Third Reich, they uncovered the full, horrific truth: abandoned camps full of starving inmates, where thousands were buried in shallow graves. Seventy-five years after Auschwitz's liberation, **Richard J Evans** recounts how Europe tried to pick up the pieces



Prisoners at Dachau celebrate the liberation of the camp by US soldiers on 29 April 1945. The camp was used again after the war to house SS personnel awaiting trial, and then German refugees

On 27 January 1945 – 75 years ago this month – advance units of the Red Army, fighting their way into Germany in the final stages of the war, reached the vast camp complex of Auschwitz, located on the eastern fringes of the Greater German Reich. It was a cold, sunny winter's afternoon. Hearing the noise of a grenade being detonated, some of the prisoners came out to greet the soldiers, holding aloft pieces of wood with fabric attached, or waving their scarves in welcome. The troops lowered their weapons as the inmates went forward to greet them. One of the prisoners described the "mad rush" to shake the Soviet soldiers by the hand. Some of the troops shouted, "You are free!" In the huts and the camp hospital, prisoners who were too ill to move found it hard to believe they had been liberated until more Red Army units arrived. Many inmates were too sick, weary and starved to feel much elation.

The Germans had hurriedly abandoned Auschwitz as the Red Army approached. Ten days earlier, the SS had begun to march long columns of prisoners away to other camps further west. Some 60,000 had joined what would become known as the 'death march', on which at least a quarter perished as guards shot stragglers or would-be escapees. When they arrived at the new camps designated to accommodate them, they found conditions drastically overcrowded and under-supplied, unhygienic and filthy. There, thousands more succumbed to malnutrition and disease. Meanwhile, more than 7,000 – mostly those judged unfit for work – remained at Auschwitz, unsupervised by German forces. In the intervening period before the liberation, they tried to organise themselves, and broke into the SS facilities for food and supplies.

All over Germany in the winter of 1944–45, similar scenes were repeating themselves. Auschwitz was only one, if the best known, of the camps set up by Hitler's Third Reich in the years following the Nazi seizure of power. Altogether, 1.1 million people had been killed in the camp, the vast majority of them Jews transported from all over Europe. More than 430,000 had been Hungarian Jews, arrested after the German occupation of their nation in the early summer of 1944. Almost all were taken straight to the gas chambers, where they were murdered by exposure to the hydrogen cyanide compound known as Zyklon B.

Aware of the fact that the outside world would rightly regard what they had done as

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a crime so terrible as to be almost beyond belief, the German authorities had tried to destroy all traces of the machinery of extermination that had killed more than 5 million Jews. (The number rose even after the liberation, as thousands of prisoners succumbed to the diseases they had contracted, reaching in the end around 6 million.) Some camps, notably Treblinka, Sobibór and Bełżec, had existed purely for the purpose of killing and nothing else; they had been dismantled in 1943 when their murderous purpose was fulfilled. Another, at Majdanek, had combined the function of a killing centre with that of a concentration camp, like Auschwitz. It was at Majdanek that the Soviets first discovered the true dimensions of the Nazi murder machine, and it was on the crimes committed by the Nazis at Majdanek rather than at Auschwitz that they concentrated when they broadcast to the world what they had found.

The birth of the camps

Hitler's regime had originally set up a network of concentration camps as part of its establishment in 1933. Up to 200,000 opponents of the Nazis, chiefly German Social Democratic and Communist party members, had been imprisoned, beaten, brutalised and intimidated, and released after a few weeks or months on the condition they would refrain from political activity. The camp system went through a temporary decline, however, and by the mid-1930s, the repressive machinery of Nazi rule had been passed over to the regular police, the judiciary, and state prisons and penitentiaries. These held 23,000 registered political offenders, while the concentration camps contained fewer than 4,000.

But in the second half of the decade, the camp population had begun to rise again, as Heinrich Himmler's SS began to target so-called 'asocials' – alcoholics and vagrants – along with petty criminals, the 'work-shy' and gay people. After the war had begun, the camps expanded ever more rapidly as they became centres of forced labour. By August 1943, they held more than 230,000 people; a year later, more than half a million; and in January 1945, some 715,000. By this time, the proportion of Jews among the prisoners had risen from 10 per cent to about a third – those deemed by the SS to be capable of work. The rest had been murdered.

The wartime expansion of the camp system took place mostly by the establishment of sub-camps or satellite camps, administered centrally by major concentration camps such as Auschwitz or Dachau but located outside, sometimes quite a long distance away. These could be very large, with thousands of inmates – like, for example, Ebensee, a sub-camp of Mauthausen, in Austria – or quite small, consisting of a few score forced labourers located at factories and production centres and living under guard in makeshift, temporary barracks. But whatever the size of the facility, the prisoners were abused, starved and treated by the SS guards as less than human. Of the 60,000 men forced to work on the construction of the V-2 rocket and V-1 flying bomb in the complex of tunnels known as Camp Dora, 20,000 died; of the 715,000 people in all camps in January 1945, half were dead by the summer. The Nazis had a special term for this: 'annihilation through labour', a system of murderous illogicality in which the usefulness of the labourers to the economy was undermined by the intention that overwork and malnutrition would lead eventually to their death.

The liberation of the camps in 1944–45 thus took place at hundreds of sites across the Third Reich. One of the most dramatic scenes to occur was at Ohrdruf in central Germany, a sub-camp of Buchenwald, where 10,000 slave labourers had been engaged in digging out underground bunkers. Discovered by advancing US troops on 4 April 1945, the camp contained thousands of dead bodies, buried in shallow graves or piled up in sheds (the SS had evacuated the majority of inmates a few days before). It so shocked the GIs that they invited Generals Bradley, Eisenhower and Patton to see for themselves: Patton, hardened though he was to the sight of death, was physically sick.

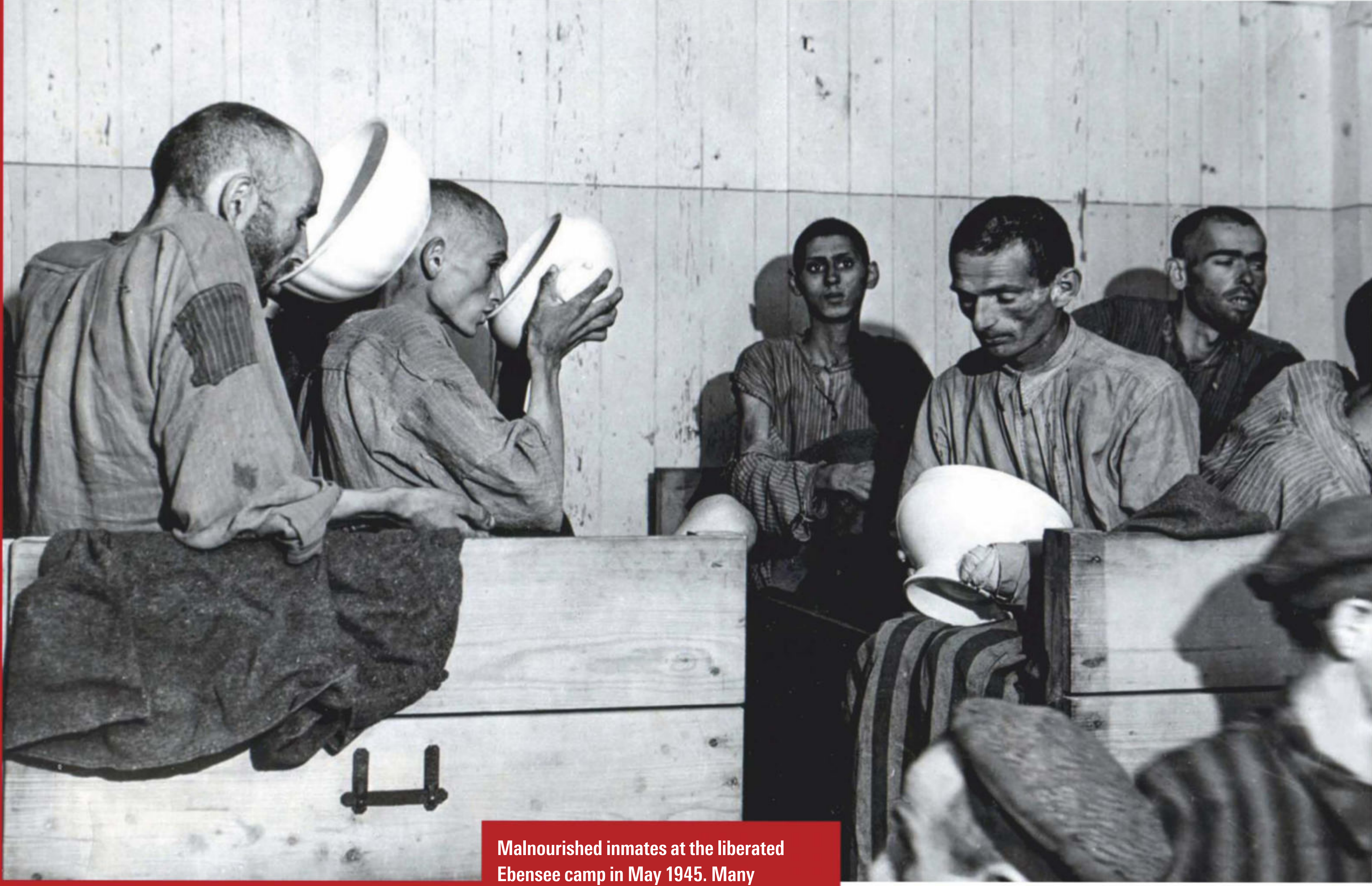
In some of the camps, able-bodied prisoners wrought their revenge on the few SS guards remaining after the bulk had left in the 'death march' evacuations. More common were revenge attacks on 'kapos': prisoners, often common criminals, who had been used by the camp management to discipline and control the inmates. Notoriously brutal and corrupt, they bore the brunt of the survivors' anger; hundreds were beaten or kicked to death. At Ebensee, around 50 kapos were killed by enraged inmates. In some cases, Allied soldiers stood by watching; in a few they shot SS guards themselves. But by and large, more humane counsels prevailed. One prisoner at Buchenwald told his fellow inmates that they should not behave as the Germans had, otherwise they'd show themselves to be no better.

In 1945, all across Germany, the occupying military authorities were faced with the immense task of clearing up the camps and trying to rescue as many of the liberated

Prisoners from Dachau pass through the town of Starnberg on a 'death march' in late April 1945. Stragglers and would-be escapees were shot, while the new camps were overcrowded and filthy, with thousands dying of disease and malnutrition

HUNDREDS OF 'KAPOS' – PRISONERS EMPLOYED BY THE NAZIS TO DISCIPLINE THE OTHER INMATES – WERE BEATEN OR KICKED TO DEATH

Jewish children at a UNRRA camp in Berlin, 1946. Former prisoners faced massive psychological trauma, and for children, who had spent months in strictly regimented and controlled conditions, adjusting to life afterwards posed serious problems



Malnourished inmates at the liberated Ebensee camp in May 1945. Many survivors were in too poor a state to benefit from the rations they were given, or died because the food was too rich to digest

US generals Bradley, Patton, Eisenhower and Eddy inspect a cremation pyre at Ohrdruf camp in April 1945, where troops had discovered thousands of bodies in sheds and shallow graves. The sights made the hardened Patton physically sick

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inmates as they could. The Allies, including the Soviets, were not well prepared to deal with the terrible conditions they discovered. Medical teams were moved in, and food and drink supplies brought to the survivors – many of whom, however, were in too poor a state to benefit, or died because the rations with which they were supplied were too rich for them to digest. Gradually, the emergency medical teams were augmented by doctors and nurses from the International Red Cross and other relief agencies.

And then there was the massive psychological damage and trauma suffered by the surviving inmates – mental wounds that it proved all too difficult to heal. Fear and anxiety prevailed. For people, not least the children, who had spent months or even years living a life that was regimented and controlled far beyond anything experienced on the outside world, finding their feet and living an independent life posed serious challenges.

Many former inmates, especially from western European countries, were able to return relatively quickly to their homes and families, but for many Poles and other eastern Europeans, and for Jews especially, there was nothing to go back to: everything had been lost, families murdered, homes and properties destroyed. They were classified as 'displaced persons' (DPs) and had to remain in camps until the Allied authorities worked out what to do with them. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

(UNRRA) was faced with the immense task of dealing with more than 7 million of these individuals, mostly forced labourers of one kind or another. German army barracks, now empty with the disbandment of the German armed forces, were commandeered, along with some hospitals, hotels and even former concentration camps. Conditions in many DP camps were poor, with strict controls imposed by the camp administration, bad rations and unhygienic conditions that took some time to improve.

More than 6 million DPs were repatriated by the end of 1945, but up to a million either could not or would not go home, for reasons including the takeover by Stalin of their homelands (the Baltic states, for example), or lingering anti-Semitism (most notably in Poland). A huge effort got under way to find host countries, but for many Jews the destination of choice was British-run Palestine – though immigration restrictions imposed by the British meant many of them had to find ways of getting there illegally.

Reprisals and memorials

Some of the camps were used again in the years immediately following the war. Dachau, for example, was initially utilised to contain SS personnel awaiting trial, and then to house German refugees and expellees from eastern Europe (of whom there were nearly 11 million). The camp facilities at Neuengamme, just outside Hamburg, Germany's second city, were remodelled to be used as a state prison. Especially controversial was Buchenwald, which fell into the Soviet occupation zone. In August 1945, it became a special camp of the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, housing more than 28,000 former Nazis, along with a substantial number of anti-communists. Conditions were so poor that more than 7,000 died. Under the Nazis, Buchenwald had housed a large number of German communists who had played a controversial role in managing the inmate population in tacit agreement with the SS. As a result, the camp's memorialisation became a site of conflict and dispute between former communists imprisoned under the Nazis, and former Nazis imprisoned under the communists.

In most of the former camps, prisoner organisations began the process of creating appropriate memorials to the victims – a responsibility also taken on by the Christian churches. Some found this problematic, given the number of non-Christian victims – not only Jews, but others as well. In 1947, the Polish authorities set up a museum in Auschwitz, and educational and memorial displays were gradually opened at Dachau and the other main camps. It often took a long time – the museum in Dachau was only established by the Bavarian state in 1965, after intensive lobbying by ex-inmates. Camp sites in the communist state of East Germany were generally neglected, and everywhere until the 1960s the prominence of Jews among the victims was underplayed. The Catholic church's role in memorialising Auschwitz proved particularly controversial.

In the immediate postwar years, many Germans denied knowledge of the camps and the conditions that had prevailed in them, despite the fact that in a number of cases, outraged Allied troops had dragooned ordinary German citizens into clearing up the camps immediately after their discovery and burying the vast numbers of bodies they found there. A thousand people were rounded up by US troops in Weimar and marched off to Buchenwald, where they were shown the dead bodies, the emaciated survivors and the crematorium and reminded of their responsibility in no uncertain terms. Meanwhile, a large-scale effort got under way to arrest SS officers, kapos and others involved in running the camps and bring them to justice. A thousand individuals were put on trial at Dachau alone. There were numerous mass trials in other countries, notably Poland, where Auschwitz was located following the war's end.

Former commandants denied responsibility, claiming that they had just been ordinary soldiers, or that prisoners had never complained. Rudolf Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz, was a rare exception: his confessions, notable for their almost complete moral blindness, were genuine, though not always accurate. He was condemned to death and hanged in the camp he had run. Others suffered a similar fate. But there was no disguising the fact that most of the perpetrators escaped justice, either by killing themselves, going underground, or – like Franz Stangl, the commandant of Treblinka – secretly emigrating to South America (Stangl was ultimately arrested). Although the trials received huge publicity, the mass of ordinary Germans quickly retreated into a state of amnesia, from which they only began to emerge towards the end of the 1960s.

The liberation of Auschwitz was just the beginning of a long, painful and only partially completed process of coming to terms with the human destructiveness of the camps and the regime that established and managed them. The legacy of

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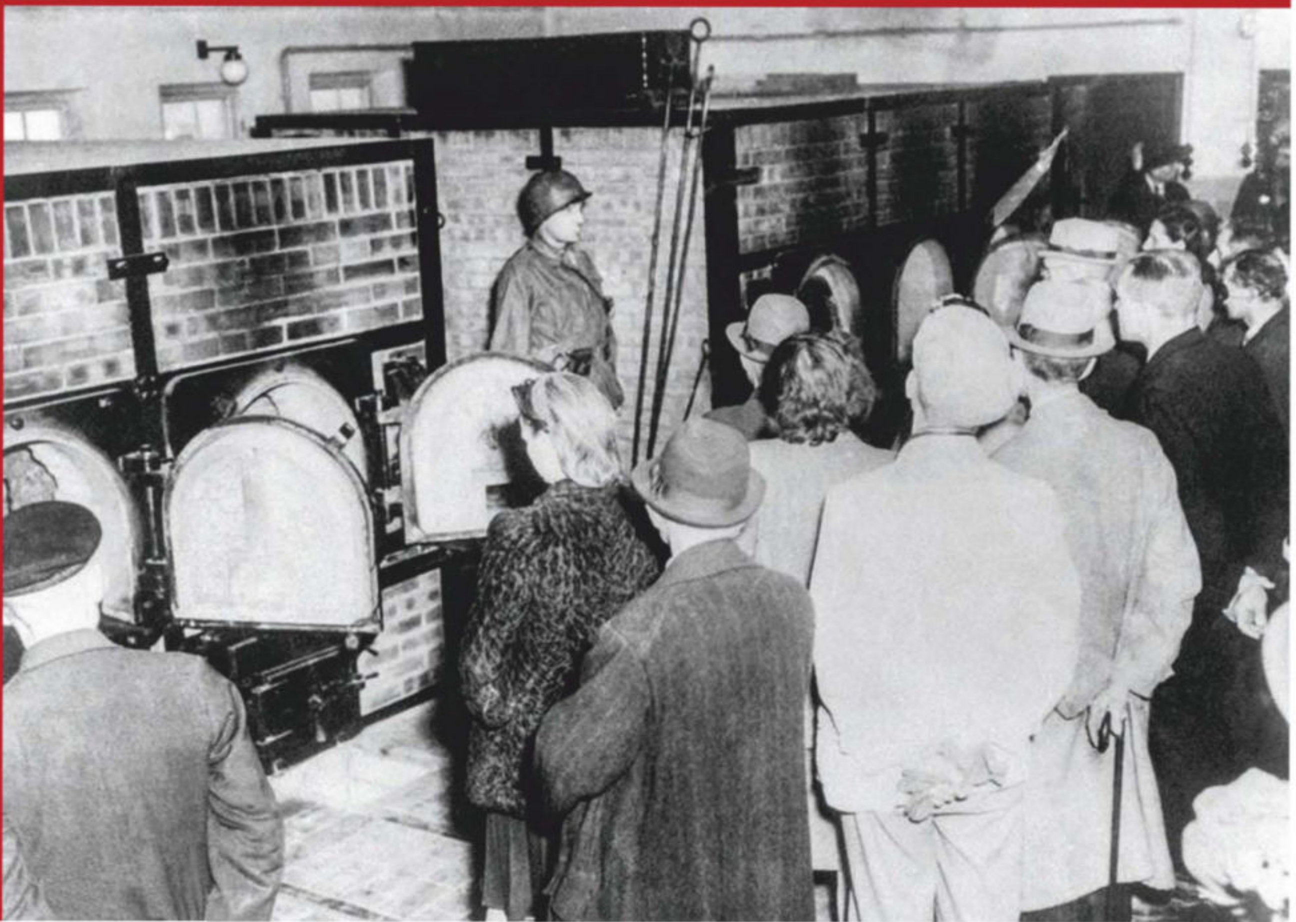
OUTRAGED ALLIED TROOPS DRAGOONED GERMAN CITIZENS INTO CLEARING UP THE CAMPS AND BURYING THE THOUSANDS OF BODIES THEY FOUND

Franz Stangl (right), commandant of the Treblinka and Sobibór extermination camps, on his arrest in São Paulo, 1967. Most perpetrators escaped justice, either by killing themselves, going underground, or emigrating in secret to South America

Jewish passengers from the ship *Exodus* land in Lübeck, Germany, after a failed attempt to enter British-run Palestine. Many displaced persons were reluctant to return home due to lingering anti-Semitism or Soviet occupation of their homelands

Former camp guards are led away by British soldiers during the liberation of Bergen-Belsen. Allied soldiers sometimes turned a blind eye as inmates exacted revenge against kapos, or in a few cases shot SS guards themselves



Civilians from Weimar are brought before the cremation kilns at Buchenwald after the camp's liberation in 1945. When the war was over, however, Germany retreated into a state of amnesia from which, writes Richard J Evans, it only began to emerge towards the end of the 1960s

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their brutality, sadism and murder on an unprecedented scale took a long time to confront. Auschwitz has come to stand for the whole camp system because, uniquely, it combined on one huge site all the main functions of the camp system: a labour camp (Auschwitz-I), an extermination camp (Auschwitz-II, at Birkenau) and a factory (the IG Farben chemical works at Auschwitz-III, Monowitz). This allowed many inmates of the Nazis' forced labour programme to observe at close quarters what was happening at the extermination camp, in contrast to the other centres of mass murder, such as Treblinka, where almost no one survived.

But this has also tended to obscure the other sites of Nazi genocide – not just the other camps and sub-camps, but also the ghettos where so many Jewish victims perished, and the shooting pits behind the eastern front where the killings began in 1941. Beyond this, too, Nazi anti-Semitism found its expression along a sliding scale of violence, beginning with physical attacks on Jews even before 1933, and going on through discrimination, expropriation, expulsion, dispossession and eventually death. As we remember the gas chambers of Auschwitz, we should not let these other facets of racist persecution, violence and murder escape our attention. H

Richard J Evans is a historian and author. His books include *The Third Reich in History and Memory* (Abacus, 2016)

WATCH The BBC is airing a selection of programmes on the **Holocaust** in the coming weeks. See page 87 for more details

Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

When did Britain come closest to revolution?

››› Closest? If we understand revolution as the overthrow of the established political order and its replacement with a new form of government, then England (if not Britain) clearly experienced a revolution in the 1640s and 1650s.

Some historians avoid using the term 'the English revolution' to describe the events of 1642–1660. They argue that the label is associated too closely with Marxist models of revolutionary change driven by class struggle that do not fit with the available empirical evidence.

Yet it is hard to think of a better word than revolution to describe the remarkable sequence of events that led from civil war to the trial and execution of Charles I, and culminated in the establishment of an English republican 'Commonwealth' in place of a hereditary monarchy.

Although these changes were not as far-reaching as some people had hoped – neither a Leveller-style popular democracy nor the Diggers' agrarian utopia was ever realised – they represented a profound transformation of English political and religious life.

It's true that England's republican experiment was relatively short-lived, brought to an end by the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, under Charles II, in 1660. Yet the Restoration did not amount to a complete reversion to the political world of pre-civil war England. The impact of the revolutionary decades on English society proved irreversible, not least because the restored monarchy itself recognised the value of many of the developments of the years it had been out of power.

Ted Vallance, professor of early modern history at the University of Roehampton

REVOLUTION
1642
1660

ILLUSTRATION BY
GLEN MCBETH

A nurse cares for an injured soldier of the Waffen-SS in 1944. Many SS men were tattooed to speed up medical treatment

Did SS guards really have their blood type tattooed on their arms?

››› The short answer is yes, though the longer answer is more complicated. It wasn't just SS guards who had the blood group tattoo, but (theoretically) all SS men. Yet, of course, there were anomalies and exceptions: members of SS Police divisions generally weren't tattooed, neither were most foreign Waffen-SS men. But ordinary Wehrmacht soldiers treated in SS hospitals sometimes were.

The small tattoo was made on the inside of the soldier's left bicep, close to the armpit, and gave the subject's blood group – either A, B, AB or O. The logic behind it was that soldiers thus marked could be better treated in combat situations – blood transfusions could be more easily given, for instance – and so their (to the Nazis) precious Aryan lives might be better preserved.

In reality, the tattoos became a useful method of identifying SS men among PoWs captured by the Allies, often with predictable results.

Roger Moorhouse, author of *First to Fight: The Polish War 1939* (Bodley Head)

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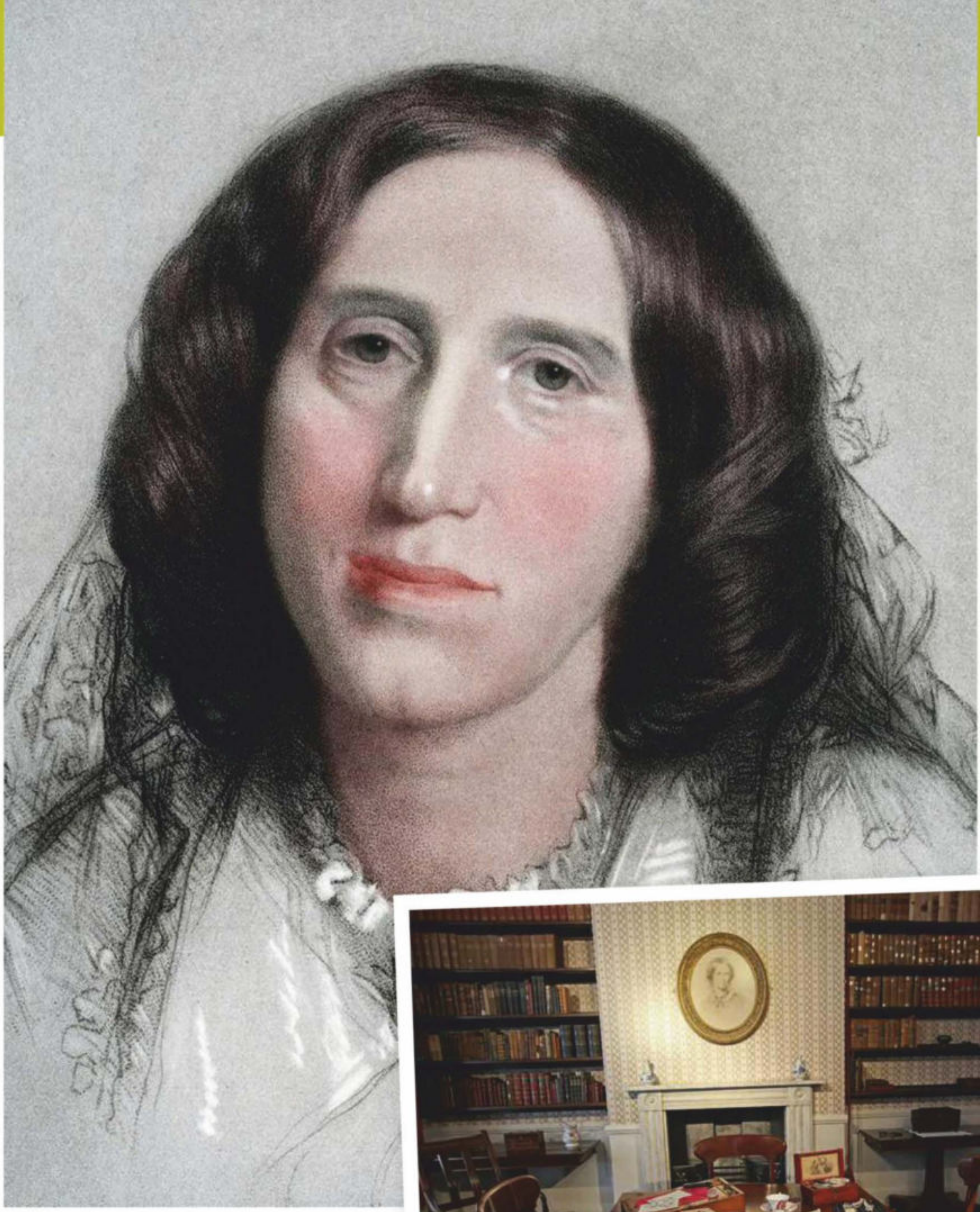
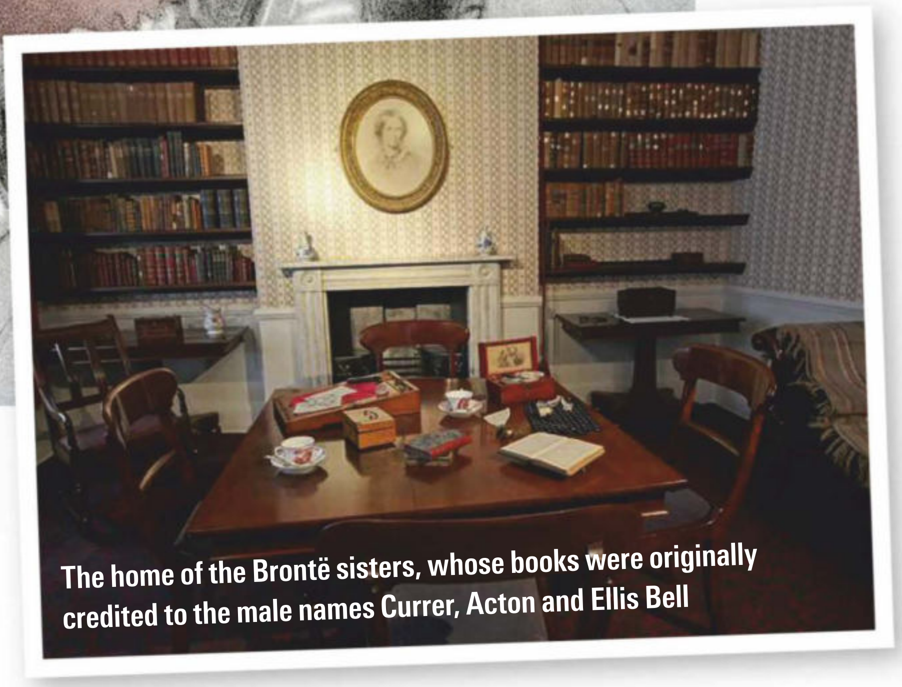
AKG-IMAGES



Mary Ann Evans, author of *Silas Marner*, *Middlemarch* and *The Mill on the Floss*, is still better known by her pseudonym, George Eliot



The home of the Brontë sisters, whose books were originally credited to the male names Currer, Acton and Ellis Bell

Why is George Eliot still published under her pseudonym, while the Brontës aren't?

There are nuanced historical reasons for the answer to this. First and foremost is the fact that Charlotte Brontë – as opposed to her pseudonym, Currer Bell – became an icon as a person rather than an author only two years after her premature death, when Elizabeth Gaskell published her bestselling *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* in 1857. The biography exposed the tragic private lives of Charlotte – and of her sisters, who pre-deceased her – to the public gaze, at a moment when their works were generally regarded as uncouth and even immoral. Showing the Brontës as suffering dutiful daughters was Gaskell's way of asking the public to forgive them for writing their shocking books.

Mary Ann Evans, on the other hand, was living in sin with her lover GH Lewes at the time she published the novels that made her famous as the great moralist George Eliot. Her pen-name was a crucial protection barrier, which she was able to keep in place during her lifetime – and she didn't die young like the Brontës.

As a result of Gaskell's *Life*, Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell became Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë early on. The posthumous downside was that the public obsession with their life in Haworth parsonage tended to drown out serious critical appreciation of their novels in the later 19th century. This was not the case with George Eliot, whose male pen-name remained in place and whose oeuvre tended to be compared with that of male writers such as Tolstoy and Balzac rather than being ghettoised as 'feminine' literature.

Lucasta Miller, author of *The Brontë Myth* (Jonathan Cape, new edition due 2020)

GETTY IMAGES

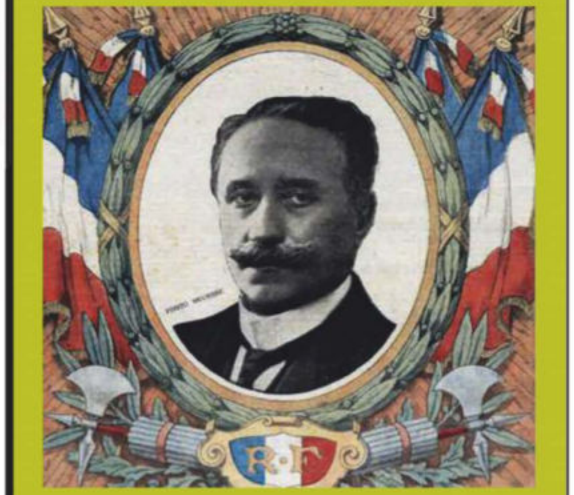
DID YOU KNOW...?

French connection

The organisation known today as **the FBI was founded by the great-nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte**. In 1906 Charles Bonaparte, the Baltimore-born grandson of Napoleon's brother Jerome, was appointed US Attorney General. During his tenure he established the Bureau of Investigation with a staff of 34 agents. The organisation would expand under the directorship of J Edgar Hoover and in 1935 was renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Fall from grace

On the night of 23 May 1920 the French president, Paul Deschanel, was travelling south in his presidential train **when he fell out of the window**. Fortunately for Deschanel, the train was travelling slowly, and he suffered only minor cuts and bruises. Nobody else, however, realised what had happened so the train continued on its way, leaving the dazed president to wander along the track in his nightclothes.

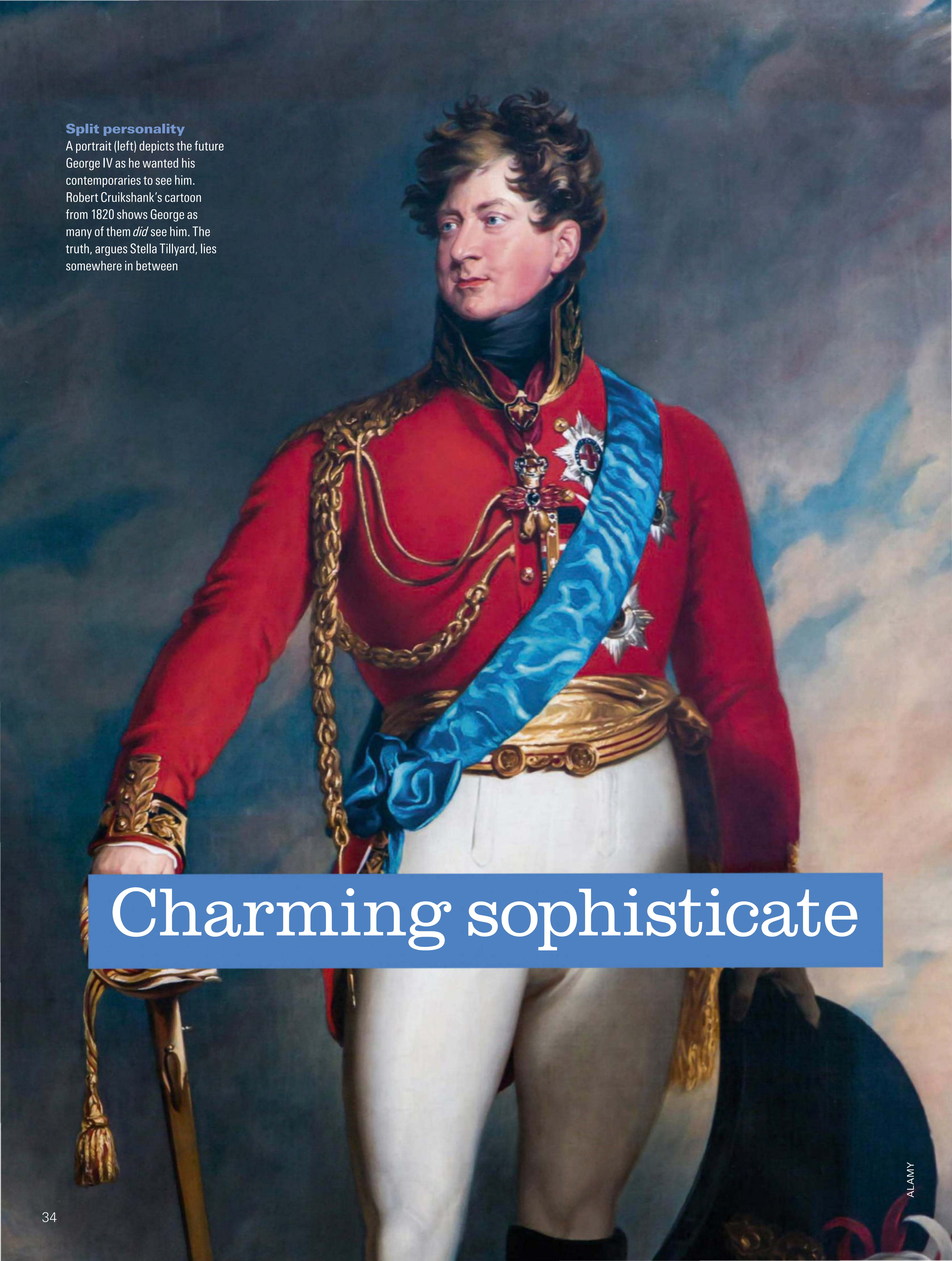


Paul Deschanel, who was president for only seven months before instability and ill health forced him to resign in 1920

Warrior queen

When Henry VIII invaded France in June 1513, he appointed Catherine of Aragon as regent in his absence. That September, James IV of Scotland was killed at Flodden after invading England. A triumphant Catherine wrote to Henry explaining that **she wanted to send him James's dead body**, but English sensibilities wouldn't allow it, so she was sending him his bloodstained shirt instead.

Julian Humphrys, author and journalist, specialising in history

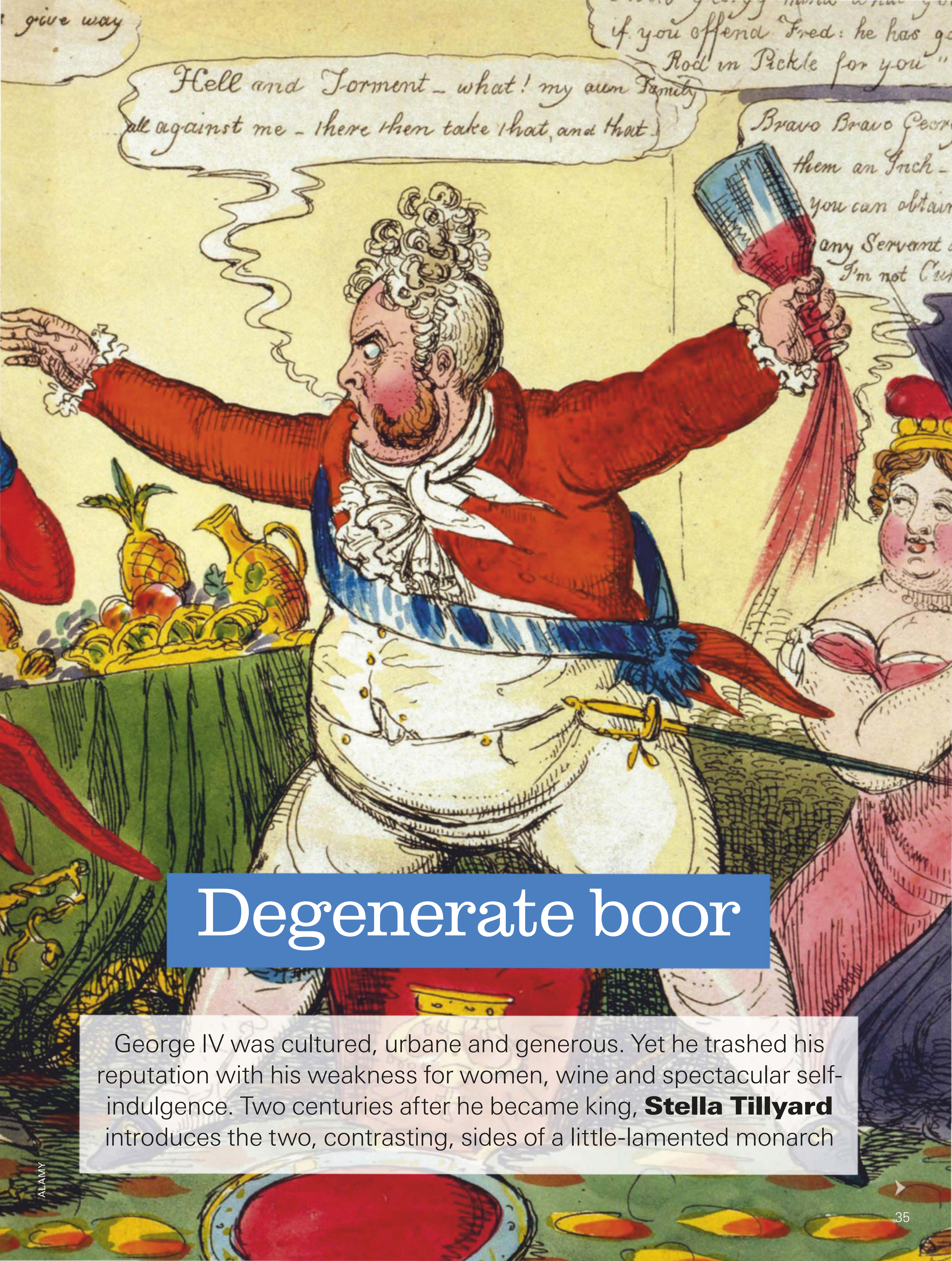


Split personality

A portrait (left) depicts the future George IV as he wanted his contemporaries to see him. Robert Cruikshank's cartoon from 1820 shows George as many of them *did* see him. The truth, argues Stella Tillyard, lies somewhere in between

Charming sophisticate

ALAMY


give way
if you offend Fred: he has
Rod in Pickle for you"
Hell and Torment – what! my aun Family
all against me – there then take that, and that
Bravo Bravo Geor
them an Inch –
you can obtain
any Servant
I'm not Cu

Degenerate boor

George IV was cultured, urbane and generous. Yet he trashed his reputation with his weakness for women, wine and spectacular self-indulgence. Two centuries after he became king, **Stella Tillyard** introduces the two, contrasting, sides of a little-lamented monarch

ALAMY

At the end of January 1820, Charles Greville, young man-about-town and future clerk to the Privy Council, was enjoying the good life at the Duke of Bedford's luxurious estate of Woburn in Bedfordshire. He "shot the whole week", he recorded in his diary, "and killed an immense quantity of game". The solemn news that demanded his close professional attention was more laconically reported. "On Sunday last, arrived the news of the king's death," he wrote, adding without comment: "The new king has been desperately ill. He had a bad cold at Brighton, for which he lost 80 ounces of blood; yet he afterwards had a severe oppression, amounting almost to suffocation, on his chest."

So George III was dead, and the British crown passed to his son George IV, who, at only 57 years old, was almost too broken down to receive it. Greville was to spend many hours in the company of the new king, but he never came to like him. Ten years later, on 16 July, the day after George IV's funeral, Greville noted, as if he had never known him: "Nobody thinks any more of the late king than if he had been dead 50 years, unless it be to abuse him and to rake up all his vices and misdeeds." The august *Times* newspaper ran a leader the same day declaring with relish that: "There never was an individual less regretted by his fellow creatures than this deceased king," and asked rhetorically: "What eye has wept for him? What heart has heaved one throb of unmercenary sorrow? If George IV ever had a friend – a devoted friend – in any rank of life, we protest that the name of him or her has not yet reached us."

> **"There never was an individual less regretted by his fellow creatures," opined the *Times* on the death of George IV**

George IV's reputation was thus poor when he acceded to the throne in 1820, poor when he vacated it in 1830, and has not really recovered since.

Part of the reason for this is the fact that he was held in low esteem both by his chief executor, the Duke of Wellington, and by his niece, Queen Victoria, who disapproved of his spendthrift ways, his morals and his laziness. The duke destroyed many of George IV's personal possessions and, presumably, as much of his private correspondence, both incoming and outgoing, that he could get hold of. As for Queen Victoria, she hung onto the best of his paintings, porcelain, silver and furniture, but sold off or junked what she didn't like.

Few of George's acts as king and, before that, regent (when George ruled as a proxy for his father, who had been declared irremediably mad) are remembered. In the absence of George's jottings and sketches, his plans for interiors and his vast and expensive wardrobe, his private world and emotions are difficult to reconstruct. And so it was left to Victoria, and the age to which she gave her name, to fill the vacuum and seal George IV's terrible image in the eyes of the British people.

Victoria, who acceded to the throne seven years after George's death (following the brief reign of William IV), set out to be everything her uncle was not: a successful and long-lasting monarch; a devoted spouse with a large brood. As if that wasn't enough to eclipse him, his father, George III, was another hardworking monarch (before he succumbed to mental illness), faithfully married for 57 years and the father of 15 children.

Although George was undoubtedly the architect of his own lowly reputation, he was also unlucky in the time and circumstances in which he inherited the throne. In 1820 he was an ailing man without a direct heir or family. Estranged from his wife, with his only daughter dead in childbirth, he was obese and dependent on alcohol and laudanum. Lackadaisical at the best of times about business, at the end of his reign he became more a hindrance to the governance of the nation than a symbol of its greatness.

Refined tastes

But this bleak picture is only part of the story. George IV was also a man of charm and taste, probably the last British monarch to display any real feeling for good painting, innovative architecture and eclectic design. He could be gracious, was naturally socially adroit, and skilled at putting visitors at their ease. His instincts were always on the side of kindness. He was playful with children and generous to his sisters, was unafraid of sentimentality and hated cruelty towards animals.

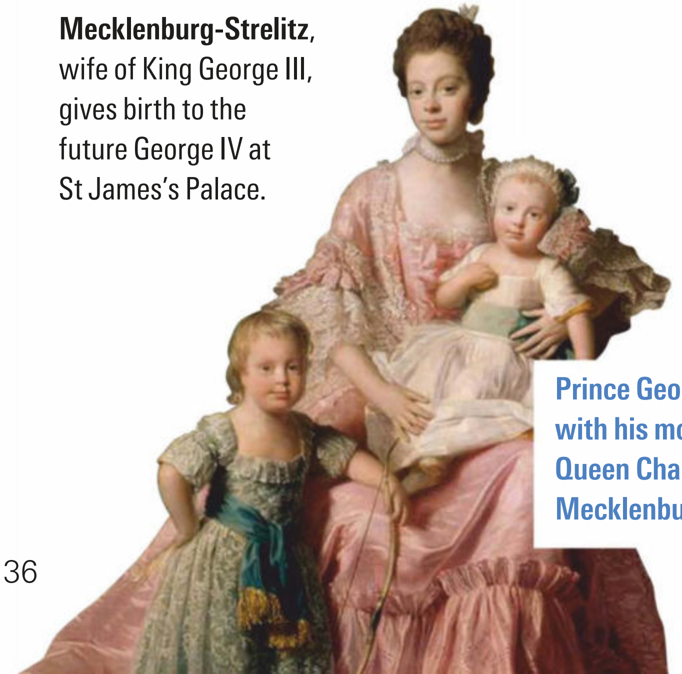
When George was king, he shrank at any discussion of the execution of criminals, which he had to approve, and always preferred leniency. "It not unfrequently happens that a culprit escapes owing to the scruples of the king," an observer noted. Had he not been who he was, his acquaintance Lady Holland wrote, "he would, I am persuaded, have been

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

TIMELINE **High art, low antics:** George IV's scandalous life

12 August 1762

Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, wife of King George III, gives birth to the future George IV at St James's Palace.



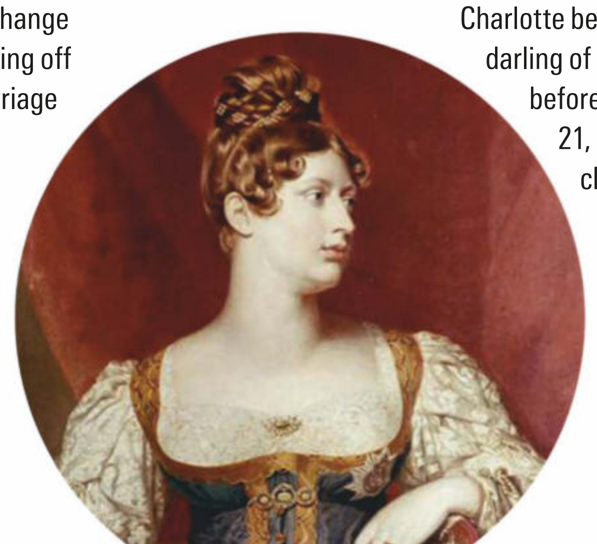
Prince George (left) with his mother, Queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz

15 December 1785

George marries Maria Fitzherbert in secret. The union is illegal on two counts: she is a Roman Catholic and he has failed to secure his father's permission to marry her.

8 April 1795

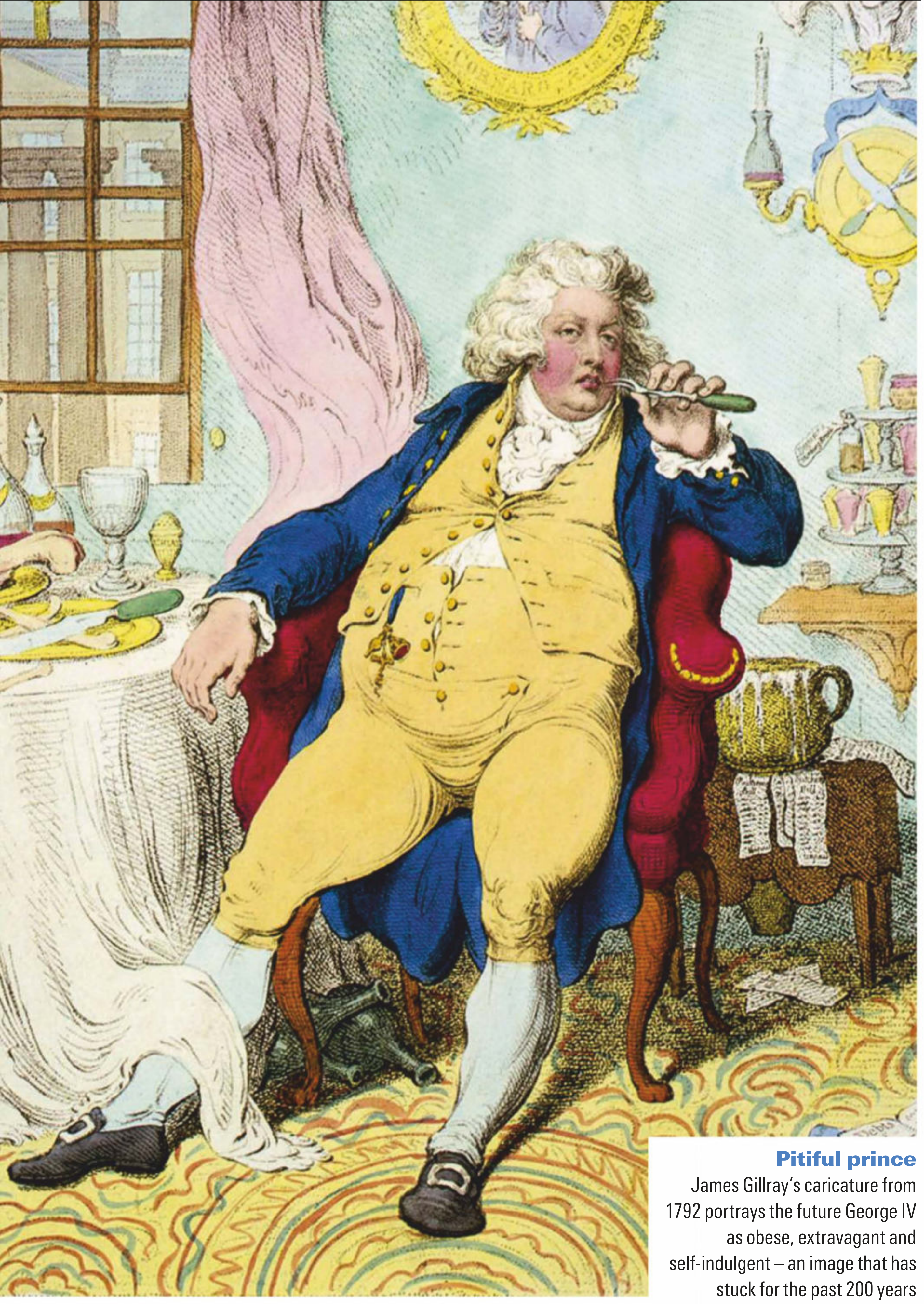
Having dismissed Maria the previous year, **George marries his cousin Princess Caroline of Brunswick**, in exchange for parliament paying off his debts. The marriage is a disaster and George soon tries – and fails – to divorce her.



George's only child, Princess Charlotte of Wales, who died after giving birth

7 January 1796

Caroline of Brunswick gives birth to George's only child, **Princess Charlotte of Wales**. Charlotte becomes the darling of the nation before dying, aged 21, shortly after childbirth in 1817.



Pitiful prince
James Gillray's caricature from 1792 portrays the future George IV as obese, extravagant and self-indulgent – an image that has stuck for the past 200 years

a most amiable man". Unfortunately, George was a prince – both Prince of Wales and Prince Regent – for a very long time, and it was this accident of birth, about which he could do nothing, that defined his life.

A very few years after his birth on 12 August 1762, George would have become aware that he was different from the long line of brothers and sisters who followed him. He was the heir to the throne, and subject way beyond his childhood not just to the conditions of the 1701 Act of Settlement that laid down the relationship between the crown and the executive, but also to his father's whims and strictures. The Act of Settlement precluded him from marrying a Catholic, while the Royal Marriages Act of 1772 forbade him from marrying anyone without his father's permission before the age of 25. By the time he was 23, in a spectacular enactment of the multi-generation Hanoverian hatred between kings and heirs, George had done both.

Emotional neglect

George's relationship with his father began to unravel at a very young age. He was removed from his family as a young boy and set up in Kew Palace under the eye of a harsh governor, Lord Holdernesse, and several tutors. By the time George was a teenager, the combination of an unremittingly severe regime, subservience and emotional neglect had produced a rebellious, self-regarding young man, one disinclined to the efforts required of his position as the future king.

This set him on an inevitable collision course with his father, who voiced a disapproval and disdain that the prince soon returned. The king "hates me", George told his friend James Harris a few years later, adding: "He always did, from seven years old." As if to spite his father, as soon as he turned 18 and was granted his own establishment,

1811
George becomes Prince Regent, ruling on behalf of his mentally ill father.

1815
George commissions John Nash to design a seaside residence for him. The result, completed in 1822, is the remarkable **Royal Brighton Pavilion** (below) inspired by the architecture of India and China.

29 January 1820
George ascends to the throne as king following the death of his father. By now, he is obese and dependent on alcohol and laudanum.

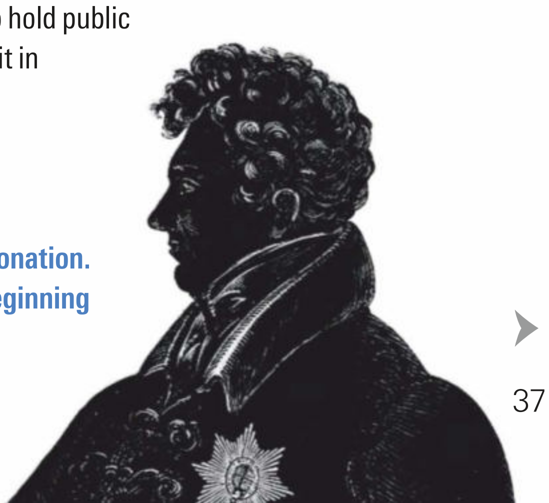
1823
George gives his father's **extensive library to the British Museum**. Throughout his life, he is a prolific collector of art, a generous patron and a fine musician.

GEORGIUS IIII D:G: BRITANNIARUM REX F:D:

A coin marking George's coronation. By now, his excesses were beginning to wreak havoc on his body

13 April 1829
Under huge pressure from his ministers, George gives assent to the **Roman Catholic Relief Act**, allowing Catholics to hold public office and sit in parliament.

26 June 1830
After teetering on the edge of death for months, George (below) **succumbs to a ruptured blood vessel.**



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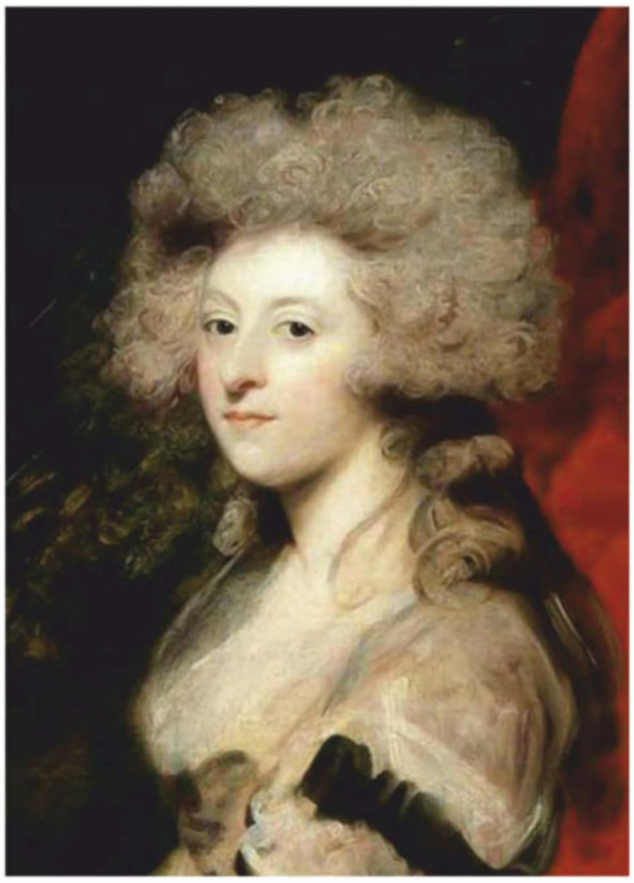
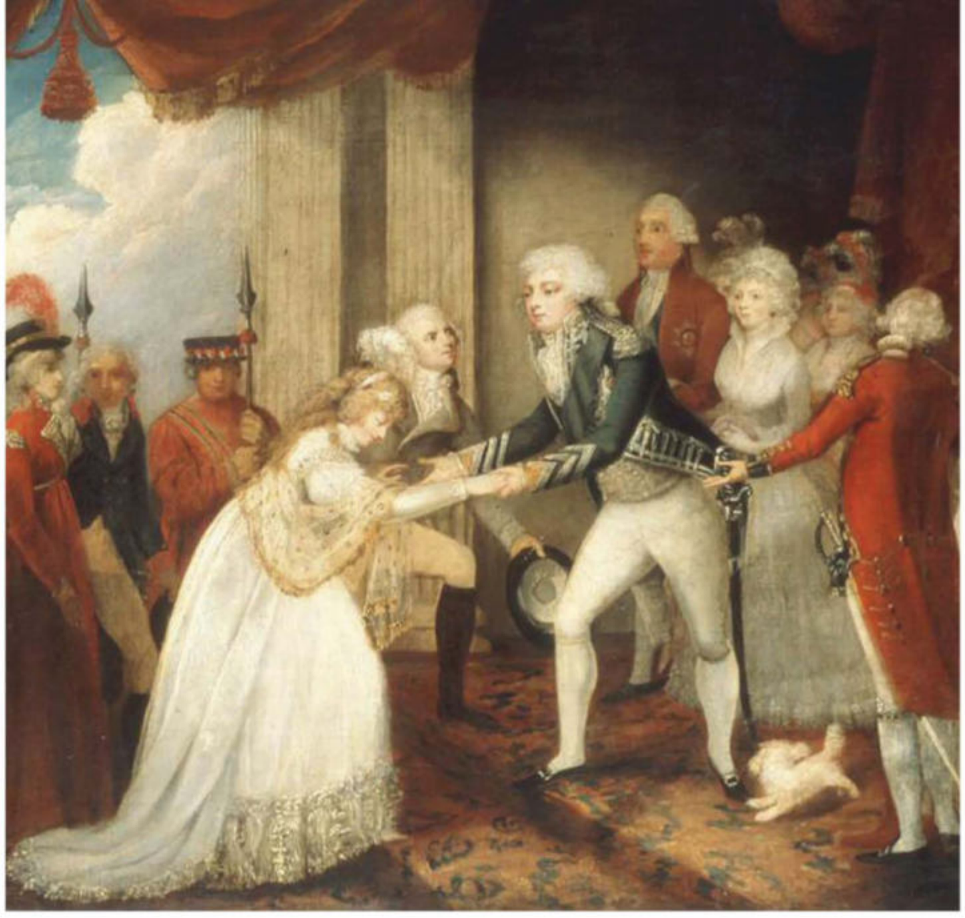
George IV's wretched reputation



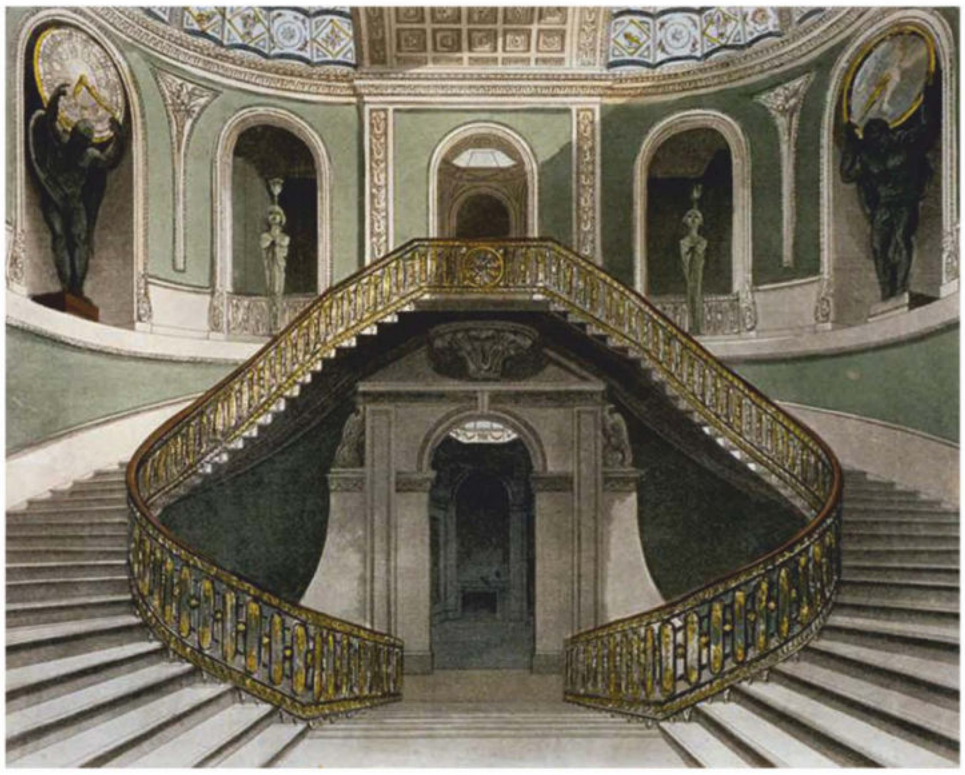
Scandalous union

George broke two laws by marrying the Catholic Maria Fitzherbert (above) in 1785. He later dumped her and married Caroline of Brunswick to pay off his debts



Sleep deprived

George receives Caroline of Brunswick on their wedding day, in a contemporary painting. Despite this idealised portrayal, the prince hated his new wife and claimed to have slept with her only three times



Spiralling costs

A c1811 painting of the staircase at Carlton House. George spent eye-watering sums of money – and ran up massive debts – renovating his Pall Mall residence

the prince began to pursue with great energy and pleasure the life of women, song and wine that his father most feared.

The duties of the Prince of Wales were undefined, but, in practice, determined by the king. From the age of 21, George received a handsome allowance of £62,000 a year, and a household and establishment of his own in Carlton House on the southern side of Pall Mall. He was forbidden from leaving the country without permission or taking a military role, both of which he longed to do, and he was now in a very public way his father's heir. George III expected him to act with the decorum his position demanded, especially in the matter of politics, where he was expected, if not to support his father, then certainly to stay out of the limelight.

Matters were supposed to continue in this way until the king died. But in 1783, when the prince moved into Carlton House, his father was only 45 years old. Decades might pass before he inherited the throne. The burning question of the prince's life was what to do in the meantime.

The answer came quickly: George began to overspend extravagantly, on full-scale renovations to Carlton House, on furniture and art and on a spectacular wardrobe. He pursued enthusiastically all the amorous opportunities that money and rank put in his way, and infuriated his father by consorting with opposition Whig politicians, notably the brilliant and louche Charles James Fox. At Carlton House he shrugged off the disciplined use of the day and tepid evening entertainments. When he was to be found at home, it was often in his bedchamber, where he transacted both friendship and business. The memoirist Nathaniel Wraxall reported that visitors often found the prince in bed, "rolling about from side to side in a state approaching to nudity".

Early in 1784, when he was still 21, the prince met a twice-widowed Catholic, Maria Fitzherbert. Six years his senior, and extremely devout, Mrs Fitzherbert rebuffed George's advances, driving him to frenzies of letter-writing and present-giving that culminated first in her fleeing to France to escape his advances, and then, when that failed, to his promising a marriage that he was in no position to offer. It went ahead, legal in the eyes of the Catholic church, doubly illegal (and therefore non-existent) in English law, a fact that would prove convenient to the prince some years later.

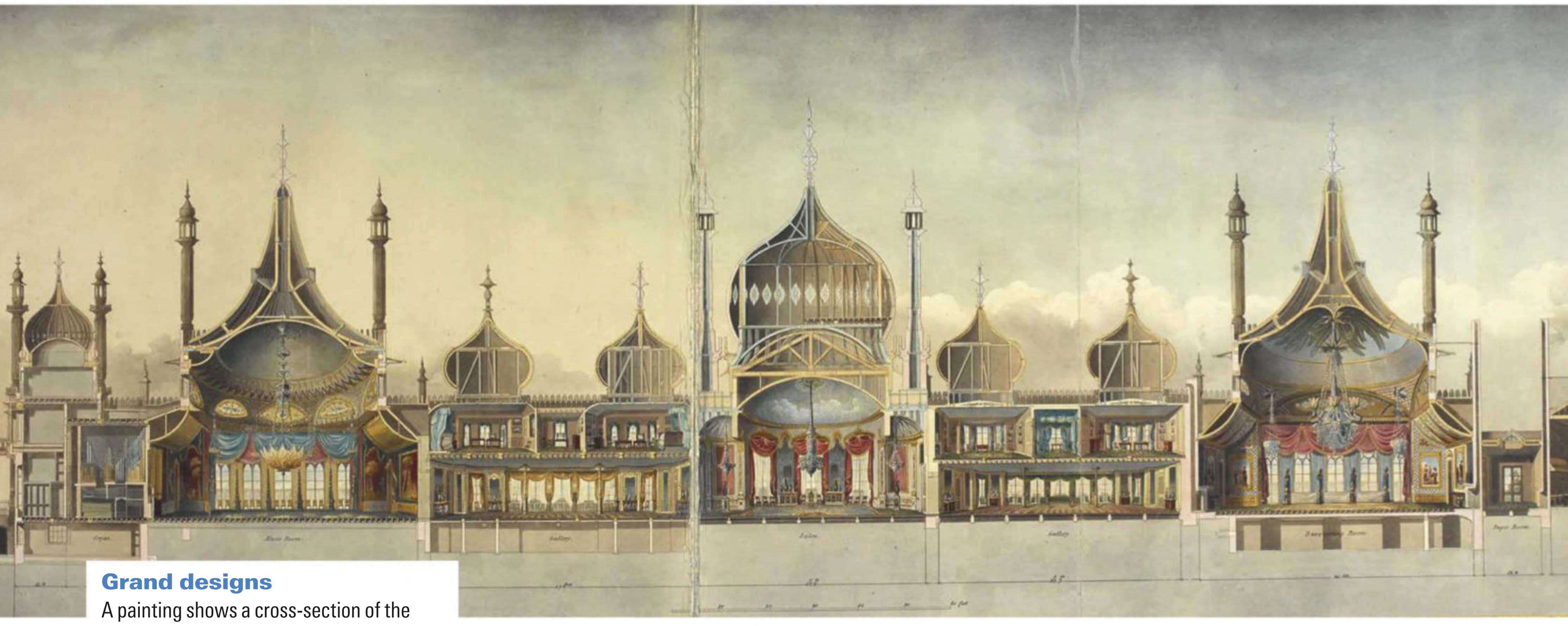
Rocky relationships

With Mrs Fitzherbert installed in a mansion round the corner from Carlton House, the prince's domestic life stabilised, though his eye continued to rove. By the early 1790s, after a crisis when the king was ill and the prince had been all too eager to take the reins of power, his relationship with both his father and the press was on the rocks. The only way to appease both was to get married properly, which would also release the funds to pay off his massive debts. In 1794, having already taken a new mistress, George dismissed Mrs Fitzherbert (though he left instructions in his will of 1796 that he be buried with his miniature of Mrs Fitzherbert round his neck) and the following year married his cousin Princess Caroline of Brunswick.

This was another disaster, undertaken with scant regard for the people involved. From the first, the prince hated Caroline and claimed only to have slept with her three times. Although an heir, Princess Charlotte, was born from this brief flurry, George's marriage only made everything worse. The public sided with the princess, the prince's debts mounted again and the king continued implacable.

Princess Charlotte's death in childbirth, aged 21 in 1817, earned George scant sympathy, and even after Queen Caroline's death shortly after his coronation, in August 1821,

ALAMY/AKG-IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



Grand designs
A painting shows a cross-section of the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, commissioned by George and, according to Stella Tillyard, "perhaps the only royal building that shows any genuine personal stamp and flair"

BRIDGEMAN

his public reputation rose very little.

Through all this, though, as prince and then king, George remained a man capable of kindness, generosity and artistic discernment. In his youth he was a leader of fashion and style, and always insisted on the highest standards of tailoring and finish in every project he undertook. He was a fine musician and was capable of genuine admiration for singers and composers, counting it an honour, for instance, to play the piano accompaniment for Gioachino Rossini when the Italian came to Britain in 1823 to sing through arias from his operas. George was a generous patron to various institutions and gave his father's extensive library in its entirety to the British Museum in 1823, a gift that resulted in the demolition of the existing museum and the building of a grand new neoclassical structure.

After music, the prince's talents were best engaged by art and architecture. George IV was the last monarch who bought any decent art for the crown (much of which is currently on display in an exhibition at Buckingham Palace – see the end of the piece for more details). His collection of Dutch 17th-century painting, first hung in Carlton House and then divided between Buckingham Palace and Windsor, was of the highest quality.

Though his alterations at Carlton House resulted in an overdose of grandeur without a controlling aesthetic, and the renovations at Windsor and Buckingham Palace lacked lightness, the construction and decoration of the Royal Pavilion in Brighton resulted in perhaps the only royal building that shows any genuine personal stamp and flair.

> **George was capable of kindness, generosity and artistic discernment. In his youth he was a leader of fashion and style**

George first took the lease of the house that turned into the pavilion in 1786, but it was only in 1815 that the plain house began its transformation under the architect John Nash. When finished in 1822, the pavilion stupefied and horrified visitors in equal measure. While one described the exterior as "taken from the Kremlin at Moscow", the interior seemed to others an enchanted palace of light, with colours shifting through stained glass, and light glancing and twinkling from lanterns, mirrors, chandeliers and lacquered walls. Glittering objects filled the rooms: gilt conch-shells, silvered dragons and snakes, and gilded furniture. Everything was saturated with colour: deep reds, yellows, blues.

Reformer to reactionary

George IV was an immensely strong man but not even his formidable frame could withstand the decades of abuse to which he subjected it. On 26 June 1830, that abuse finally caught up with him and, after months of drifting towards death at Windsor Castle, a ruptured blood vessel sent him to his grave.

Few lamented his passing – as the *Times*' leader-writer pointed out with stinging relish – yet George's reign may not have been the unmitigated disaster that it is widely portrayed to be. If George, the man, had two sides to him, so does his legacy. He was, for example, too averse to bureaucratic work to interfere much in the business of government – yet this very lack of meddling contributed to the solidity of the constitutional monarchy over which he presided.

During his life, George undertook a political journey from reformer to reactionary. The French Revolution ended the sympathy he had once held for constitutional change, and the Napoleonic Wars and unrest in Ireland turned it to a firm hostility. But, as his reign drew to a close, George – under immense pressure from the Duke of Wellington – signed the Catholic Relief Act of 1829. This not only allowed Catholics to hold public office and sit in parliament, but also paved the way for the more wholesale changes to the franchise of the Great Reform Act of 1832.

George IV may have, at times, appeared hellbent on wrecking the monarchy. But, in signing the act, he contributed to the piecemeal reforms that were handed out with just enough frequency to preserve aristocratic government and the crown itself.

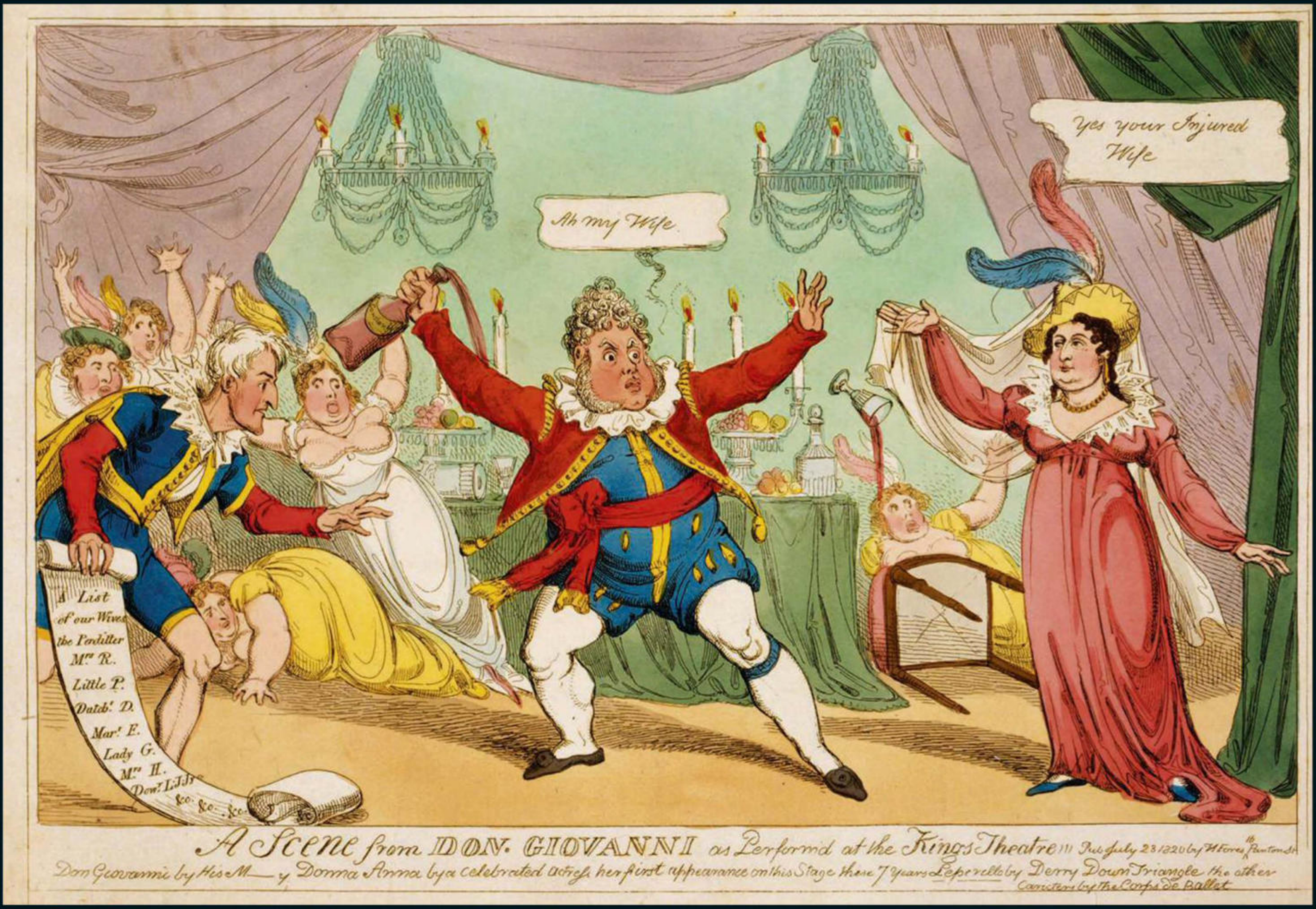
Stella Tillyard is an author and historian. Her latest book, *George IV: King in Waiting*, was published by Allen Lane in July 2019

VISIT **George IV: Art & Spectacle**, an exhibition at Buckingham Palace, showcases some of the highlights of the king's extraordinary art collection: *rct.uk*

» **Turn the page to see five examples of contemporary cartoonists' savage portrayals of George IV**

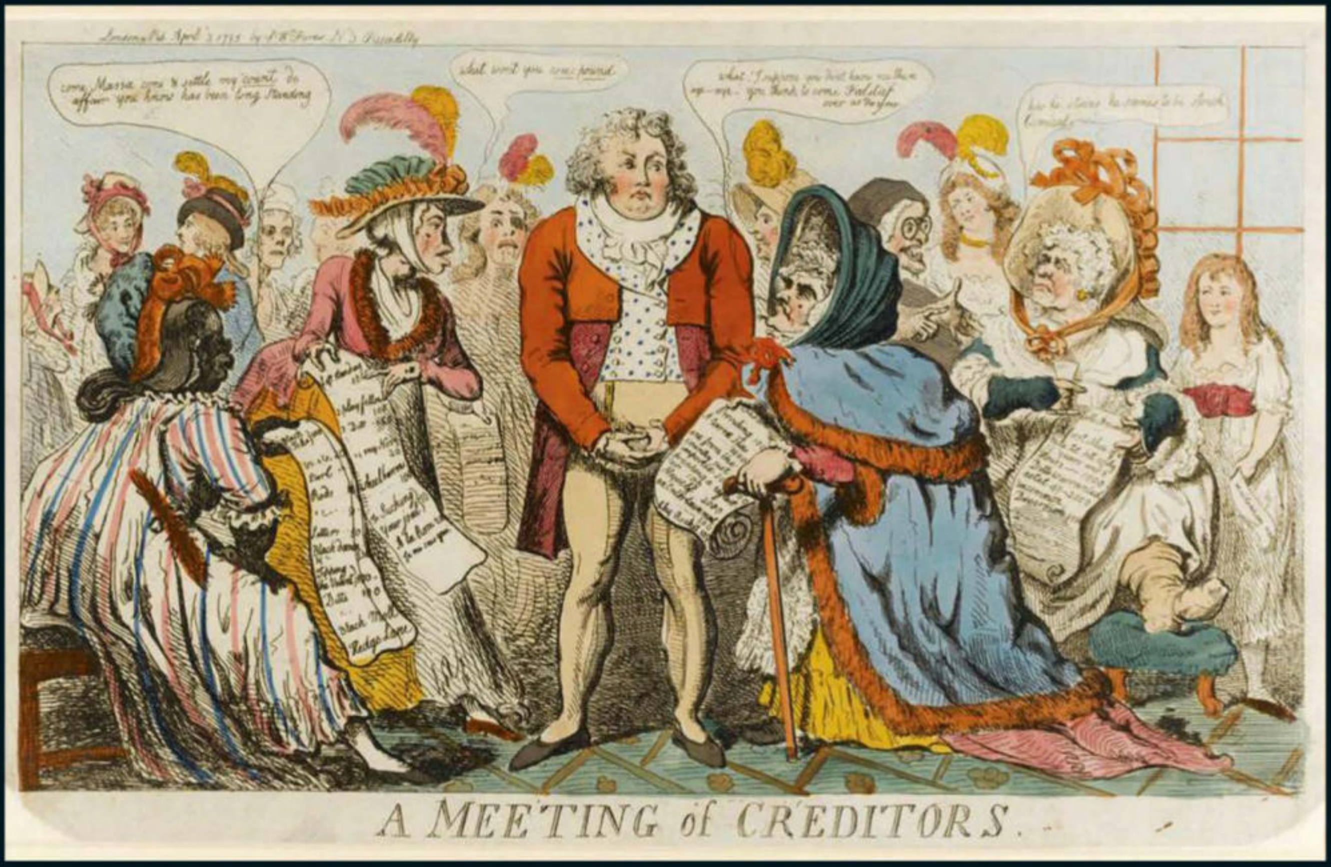
Royal laughing stock

Contemporary satirists turned poking fun at George IV into an art form, as these illustrations show


Ah my Wife
Yes your Injured Wife
A List of our Wives
the Perdita
Mrs R.
Little P.
Datch D.
Mar. E.
Lady G.
Mrs H.
Dow. L.J.J.
&c. &c. &c.
A Scene from DON. GIOVANNI as Perform'd at the Kings Theatre !!! Pub. July 23 1820 by H Fores 50 Panton St
Don Giovanni by His M——y Donna Anna by a celebrated actress her first appearance on this Stage these 7 years Leporello by Derry Down Triangle the other Caricters by the Corps de Ballet

Stage fright

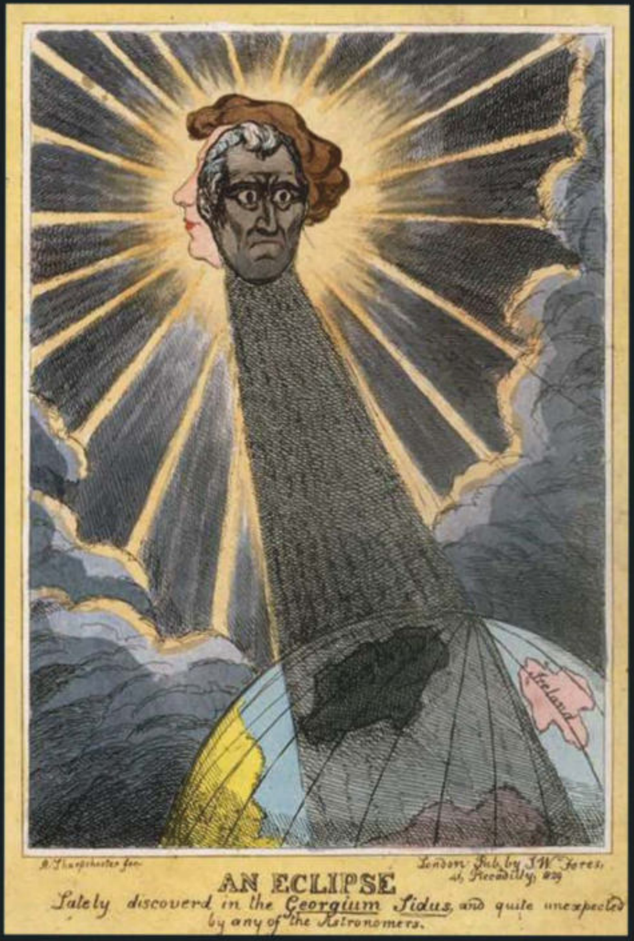
George – depicted in 1820 as Mozart's operatic womaniser Don Giovanni – recoils in horror as his estranged wife, Queen Caroline, returns from the continent. George's problem was not so much his adultery as the support of the public for his wife, whom he was determined should never be crowned.


come Massa come & settle my count, do affair you know has been long standing
what wont you one pound
A MEETING of CREDITORS.

Bills, bills, bills

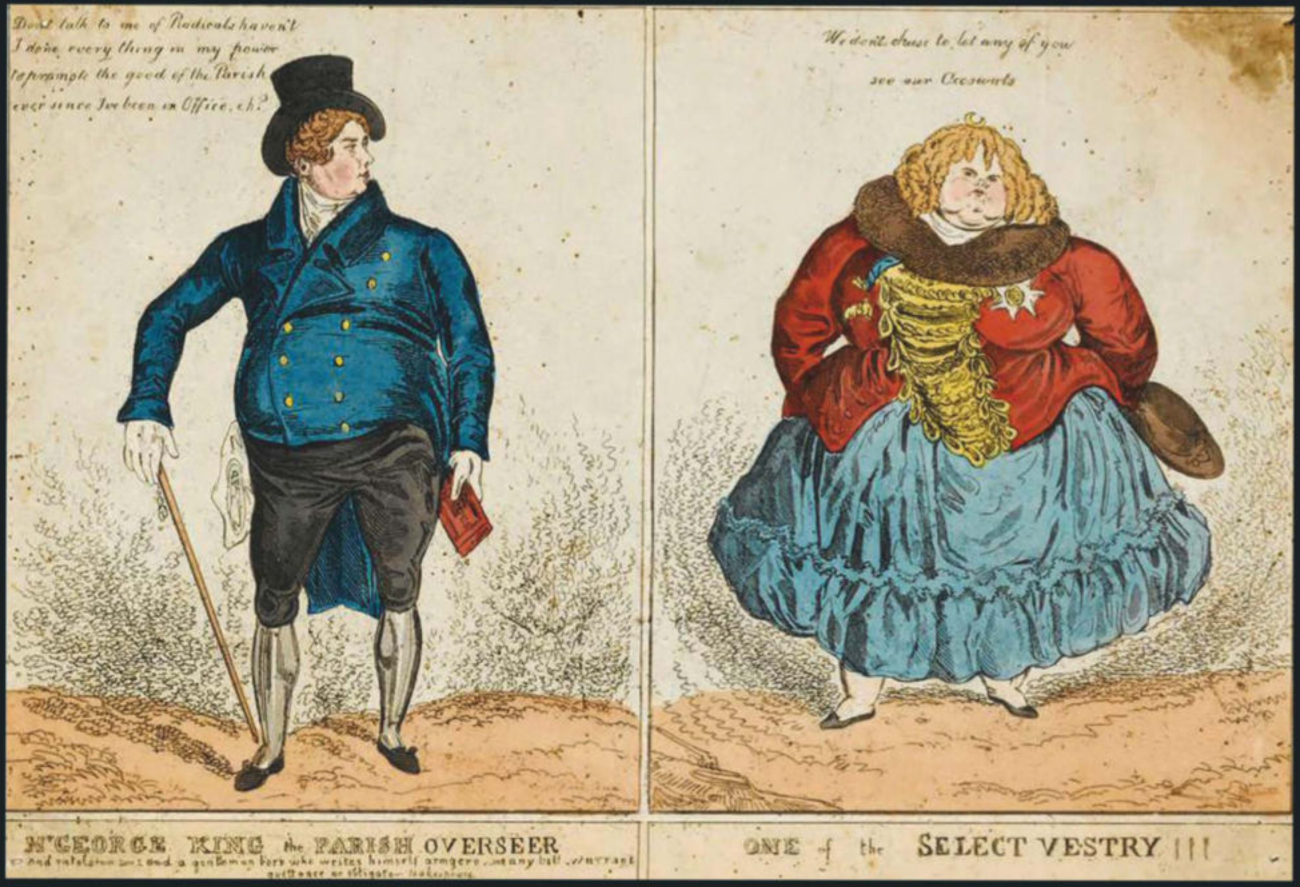
The Prince of Wales is surrounded by "clamouring bawds and courtesans" demanding payment in this 1795 image – an explicit reference to his sordid extracurricular activities. At this point, his debts amounted to £630,000 – a staggering £74m in today's money.

ALAMY


AN ECLIPSE
Lately discoverd in the Georgium Sidus, and quite unexpected by any of the Astronomers.
London: Pub. by S.W. Fores, 41, Piccadilly, 1829

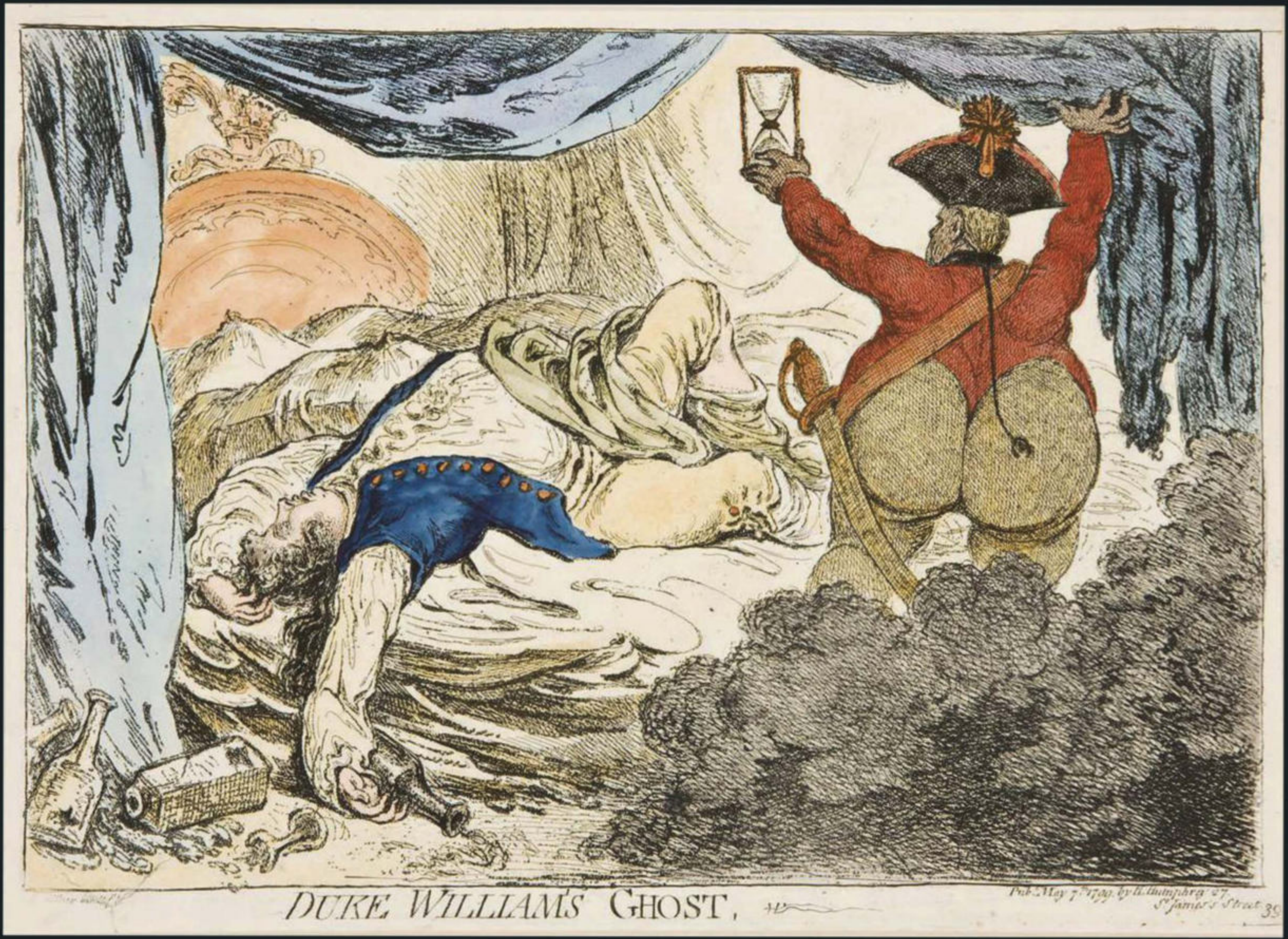
Affairs of state

King George is castigated for his political backsliding and profligacy in this image from the 1820s. Alongside him is his mistress Lady Conyngham, whose husband had been promoted to the British peerage and Privy Council, and given the title of Lord Steward of the Household. The cartoonist gives her medals and makes an ironic reference to her inflated household accounts.


Don't talk to me of Radicals haven't I done every thing in my power to promote the good of the Parish ever since I've been in Office, eh?
We don't chuse to let any of you see our Accounts
Mr GEORGE KING the PARISH OVERSEER
ONE of the SELECT VESTRY !!!

Sun king

This powerful image from 1829 shows George IV eclipsed by his prime minister, the Duke of Wellington – a man he feared, admired and often disliked. Wellington forced the king, much against his will, to sign the Catholic Relief Act on 13 April 1829, finally bringing about Catholic emancipation.


DUKE WILLIAM'S GHOST.
Pubd May 7th 1799, by H. Humphrey 27 St James's Street

Haunting image

This 1799 cartoon shows George being visited by the ghost of his great-uncle William, Duke of Cumberland – nicknamed 'Butcher Cumberland' by supporters of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, which he ended in devastating style at the battle of Culloden. Cumberland's presence in this James Gillray cartoon is a warning to the prince at a time when the monarchy was threatened by the Revolutionary Wars with France. **H**

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“WE ARE THE LIONS, MR MANAGER!”

Up for the fight
Jayaben Desai salutes fellow pickets at the Grunwick film processing factory in 1977. The Asian women's strike drew support from students, anti-racist groups and rank and file trade unionists

HOMER SYKES

In 1977, almost 20,000 Britons took to the streets to support a group of south Asian women who had walked out on strike from a London factory. **Sundari Anitha** and **Ruth Pearson** chronicle a remarkable outpouring of solidarity for the rights of female migrant workers

"What you run here is not a factory, it is a zoo. There are monkeys here who dance to your tune, but there are also lions here who can bite your head off. And we are the lions, Mr Manager! I want my freedom!" With these words – uttered in the middle of the long, hot summer of 1976 – 43-year-old Jayaben Desai stormed out of the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories in London. In doing so, she triggered one of the most significant industrial disputes in modern British history.

A few days later, Desai was back at the factory, but this time she had no intention of doing any work. Instead she stood on a picket line, where she was joined by 137 staff out of a workforce of 500, each demanding union recognition and an end to arbitrary and humiliating management in the workplace. Over the following two years, Desai's strike would attract thousands of supporters, spark intense media coverage, throw the spotlight on the treatment of Britain's migrant workforce, and elicit a fierce reaction from right-wing groups determined to weaken the power of the trade unions. Many of the issues that the Grunwick dispute brought simmering to the surface four decades ago still haunt British industrial relations today.

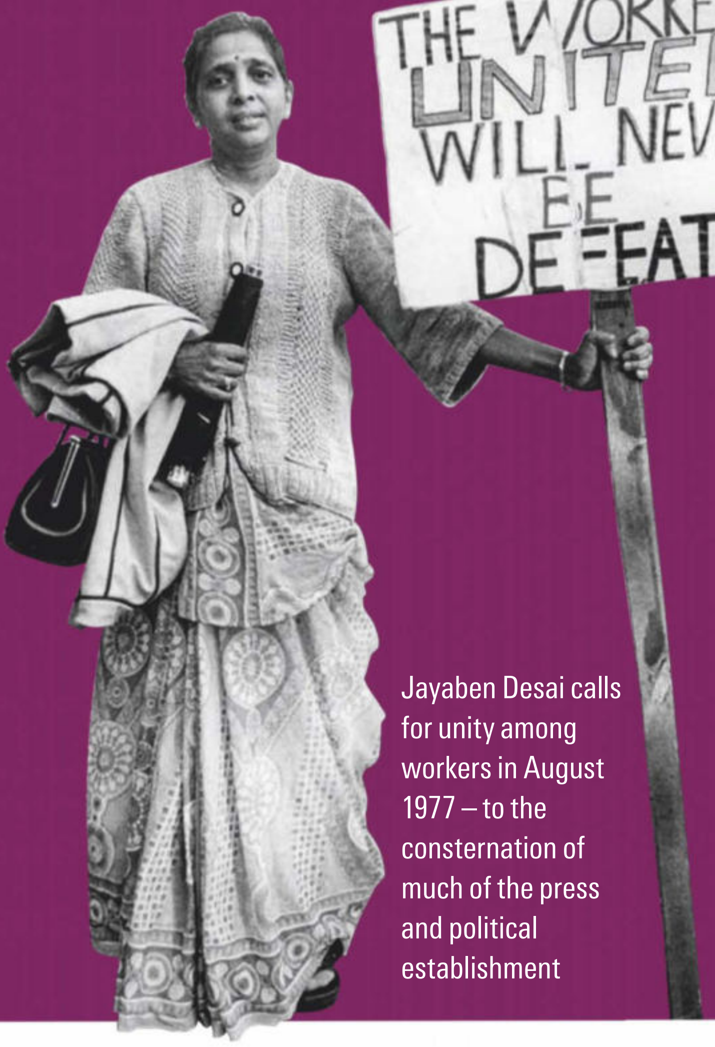
Powered by frustration

Desai's tirade against her manager on 20 August 1976 took just a few seconds to deliver, but the frustration that powered her words had been brewing for years.

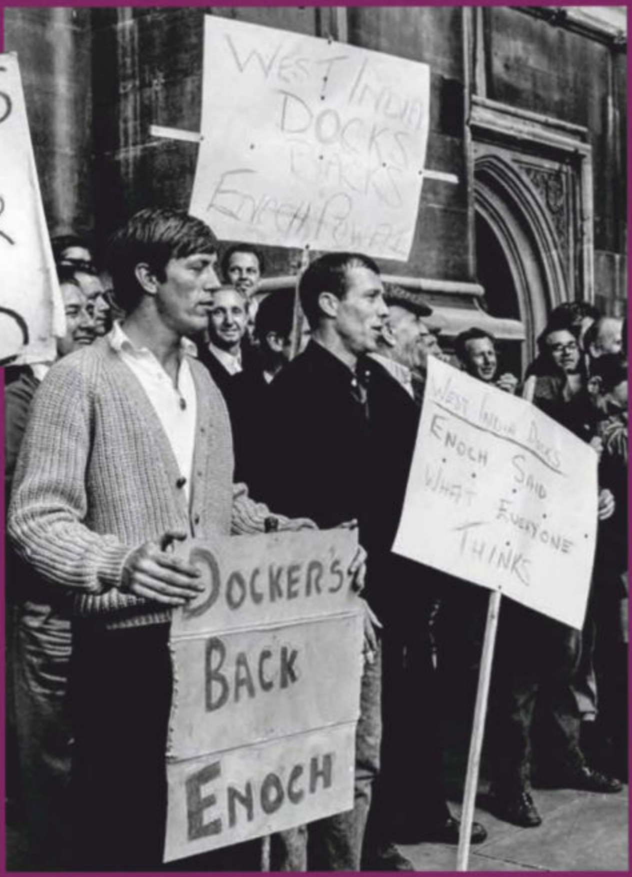
Desai and her fellow strikers were English-educated migrants of south Asian origin whose families had settled in countries in east Africa during British colonial rule. These largely middle-class families had, for the most part, carved out successful lives in Africa. But the fall of Britain's colonies transformed the landscape, unleashing a wave of Africanisation policies (the most infamous of which was Idi Amin's expulsion of Asian people from Uganda in August 1972) that persuaded many that their futures lay elsewhere. Thousands were British passport holders and now chose to swap east Africa for the UK. On arrival in this new, cold, alien land, many of the female migrants sought to supplement their families' incomes by searching for low-paid, manual work.

Those settling near the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories in Willesden, north-west London, found an employer more than willing to offer them work. In a period of expansion for the domestic photographic market – as more and more Britons headed off on holiday and took snaps of their families while they were there – the Grunwick photo processing plant found itself increasingly relying on cheap labour supplied by south Asian female migrants, commonly regarded as hardworking and docile.

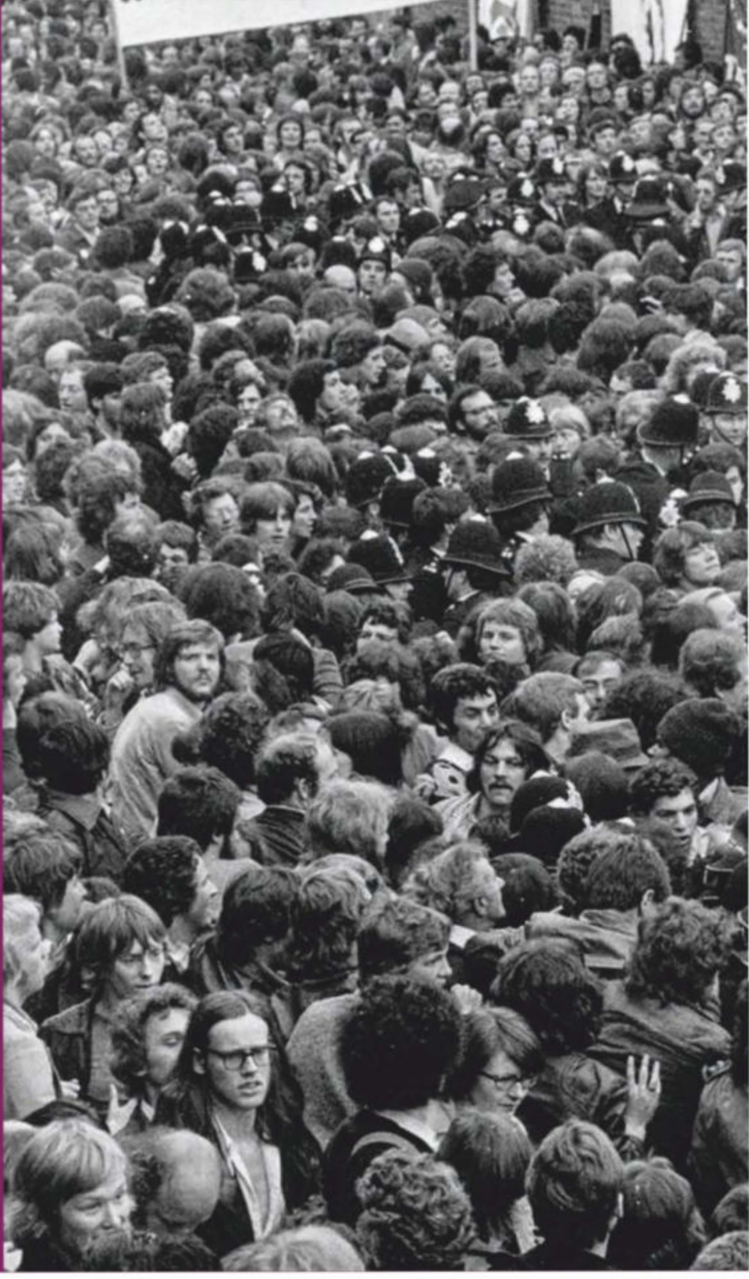
"Asians had just come from Uganda and they all needed work, so they took whatever was available," recalled Jayaben Desai, when we interviewed her in 2007. "Grunwick put out papers [leaflets]: 'come and we will give you a job. We give jobs to everyone.' When I went, a friend of mine followed. And


THE WORKERS UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED

Jayaben Desai calls for unity among workers in August 1977 – to the consternation of much of the press and political establishment


WEST INDIA DOCKS BACKS ENOCH POWELL
DOCKERS BACK ENOCH
WEST INDIA DOCKS ENOCH SAID WHAT EVERYONE THINKS

Change of heart
London dockers declare their support for Enoch Powell's anti-immigrant rhetoric, 1968. A decade later, the dockers stood shoulder to shoulder with the striking south Asian women of Grunwick



soon they were full of Asians."

Yet while this arrangement initially suited both parties, cracks soon began to appear in the relationship between the migrants and their employees. These tensions were sparked by the degrading treatment that Grunwick's management often meted out to its south Asian workforce. In the early 1970s, such treatment was a fact of life for 'unskilled' immigrants across London's workplaces. Yet at Grunwick, where the pressure for results soared as the company expanded, it was particularly egregious: staff found themselves under constant surveillance and routinely humiliated by being given dressing-downs in full sight of their co-workers.

"The managers were in a glass cabinet," recalled Desai. "They could see us, and if they called us in to their office, the rest of the workers could see them, but could not hear what was going on. Such was their gameplan. We used to work out of fear."

Last-minute notice

Pay at Grunwick was low by industry standards, employees struggled to get time off for doctors' appointments (the management's attitude towards those wishing to attend ante-natal clinics was a particular source of frustration), and they even had to ask permission to go to the toilet. Yet perhaps the biggest cause of grievance was the issue of overtime. This sometimes extended until 10pm and was often dropped on the employees at the very last minute. The Grunwick workers came from households that had employed servants in east Africa, and were used to the respect that their relatively privileged social status had conferred. To be told – in the brusquest of terms – that they wouldn't be able to head home to their families that evening was, for many, simply beyond the pale.

And so it proved on the evening of 20 August 1976 when Jayaben Desai's manager confronted her with a demand for overtime. Mindful of the complicated bus journey home and the 'second shift' of cooking and cleaning that awaited her, Desai protested and stormed out. Within a matter of days, the Grunwick dispute had begun.

Having walked out of the Grunwick plant, Desai and her fellow strikers joined the white-collar union APEX (the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff). On 6 September 1976, Roy Grantham, the general secretary of the union, told the annual conference of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) that the Grunwick strikers were protesting against "a reactionary employer taking advantage of race, and employing workers on disgraceful terms and conditions".

By then, that employer had sacked the workers for participating in strike action. But if it envisaged that this would put a lid on the crisis, it was in for a rude awakening. In fact, the Grunwick strike exploded into a cause celebre for the trade union movement. By the summer of 1977, mass pickets – combined with a postal boycott of the Grunwick mail by the nearby Cricklewood sorting office – created a period of intense mobilisation, and the real possibility of a victory. Growing support from rank and file trade unionists, students, workers, anti-racist and feminist groups – as well as political parties on the British left – swelled the ranks of the pickets week after week. On 11 July 1977 – a 'National Day of Action Against Grunwick' – their numbers reached almost 20,000.

PRIME MINISTER JAMES CALLAGHAN FEARED THAT THE STRIKE MIGHT BRING DOWN HIS LABOUR GOVERNMENT

But victory was ultimately to remain elusive, and that's partly because the authorities and hostile elements of the press and the political establishment soon began to formulate a response.

The Grunwick dispute marked the first time that the Special Patrol Group, an elite paramilitary-style squad trained to deal with public disorder and acts of terrorism, was deployed in an industrial dispute, a precursor to its wide deployment in the 1984 miners' strike. There were more than 550 arrests during the strike, the largest number in any industrial dispute since the General Strike of 1926. After one particularly brutal day in November 1977, 243 pickets were treated for

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Crowd trouble Police attempt to hold back pickets, 9 July 1977. The strike saw the largest number of arrests in an industrial dispute since the General Strike of 1926

COLLABOR
ORATION
PATHY BUT STARVING FOR ACTION!"
ATION
TUC COLLABORATION
CONFRONTATIO
NEGOTIAT
INC

Fighting on Protesters (including Jayaben Desai, centre) on hunger strike in November 1977 following the TUC's decision to call off its mass picket

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injuries, 12 with broken bones. And when, inevitably, the unrest made the front pages of the national press, it was often the pickets, not the police, who were portrayed as the instigators of the violence.

When asked about TV coverage of the dispute, one of the strikers, Nirmalaben Patel, said: "We used to be surprised. Is that what happened yesterday we used to wonder… we did not see any of that happening."

Documents held in the National Archives suggest that the police may have been encouraged to take a robust approach to the pickets by those in the highest echelons of the British government. According to notes from a meeting at Chequers on 26 June 1977, Prime Minister James Callaghan urged the home secretary to pressure the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to adopt a more proactive response, mindful of the "danger of bringing the government down". Growing ever more concerned at the scale of the dispute, on 30 June 1977 the Labour government appointed Lord Scarman to lead a Court of Inquiry into the strike.

If Callaghan watched the Grunwick dispute unfold with some trepidation, then those to the right of the political spectrum regarded it with outright hostility. On 10 July 1977, the rightwing National Association For Freedom (NAFF) launched 'Operation Pony Express', an attempt to get Grunwick mail out of London, thus circumventing the postal boycott. The operation largely succeeded, and when (in the face of threats of expulsion from union leaders) Cricklewood postal workers called off their boycott of Grunwick, the alliance that had so far sustained the industrial action began to splinter. By the time the TUC – under intense pressure from the Labour government and the political right – retreated from mass picketing, the fate of the Grunwick strike was effectively sealed.

Jayaben Desai and her supporters mounted a hunger strike outside the TUC headquarters in November 1977 for a resumption of mass pickets, but to no avail. Industrial action limped on for a few more months before the strike committee announced the end of the dispute in the summer of 1978.

The striking women were left feeling disillusioned with the trade union movement. As Jayaben Desai put it, official support from the TUC was "like honey on the elbow – you can smell it, you can feel it but you cannot taste it". Even the Scarman Inquiry's recommendations that the women receive union recognition and be reinstated in their old jobs left a bitter aftertaste; the recommendations were not legally binding, and so the Grunwick management rejected them.

Utterly abandoned

On the face of it, the Grunwick dispute ended in abject defeat. The strike achieved none of its goals, its protagonists felt utterly abandoned, and the full incorporation of migrant and female workers into the trades union movement remained a dream – a decades-long project that continues to this day.

But is that to say that the strike achieved nothing? Absolutely not. In a period characterised by a rising tide of anti-immigrant sentiment – one in which trade unions' support for black and minority ethnic workers was conspicuous by its absence – the Grunwick dispute was truly historic. This was, after all, the first time the UK had witnessed such wide-ranging support for migrant female workers.

In 1968, London dockers had marched to the Houses of Parliament in support of Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech, demanding an end to black immigration. Just a decade later, they packed into the narrow streets of Willesden alongside thousands of fellow protesters, carrying the Royal Docks Shop Stewards' banner at the head of a mass picket.

In his book *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider*, Satnam Virdee describes a shift in the British working class "from being attached to a narrow understanding of class that nested within dominant conceptions of race and nation towards a more inclusive language that could also encompass a racialised minority and female workers". If the actions of Jayaben Desai and her fellow strikers in the 1970s have one enduring legacy, then this is surely it. **H**

Sundari Anitha is professor of gender, violence and work at the University of Lincoln. **Ruth Pearson** is emeritus professor of development studies at the University of Leeds. They are the authors of *Striking Women* (Lawrence & Wishart, 2018)

LISTEN AGAIN To listen to **Grunwick Changed Me**, a BBC Radio 4 documentary on the Grunwick dispute, go to *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07npvfh*

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What’s your legacy?

By leaving a gift in your Will to Cancer Research UK, you could help fight cancer for future generations

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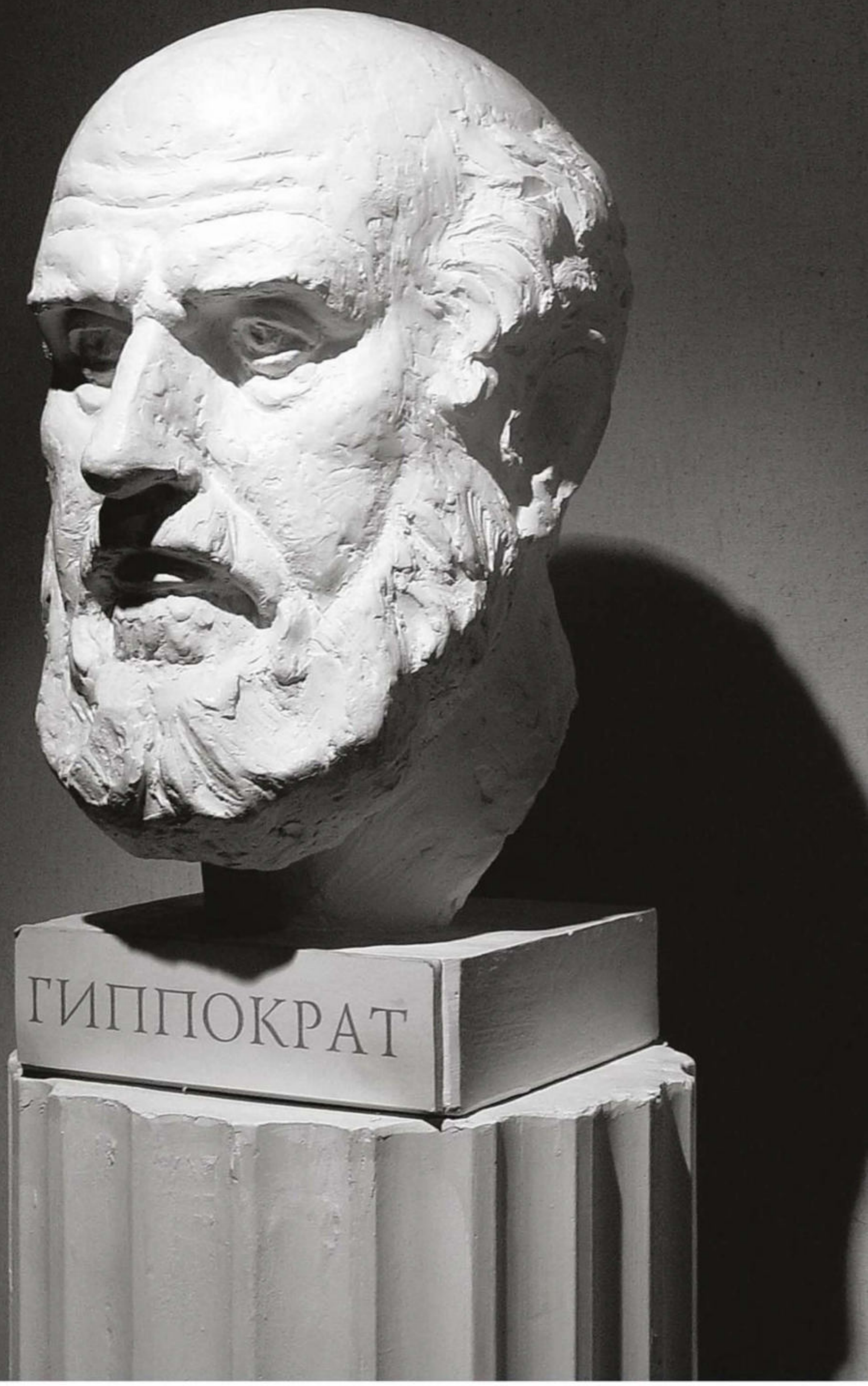
Cancer is not a new or modern disease – it’s older than mankind. Some of the earliest descriptions of the disease can be found on papyri from Ancient Egypt, and even the word ‘cancer’ was coined by the Greek physician Hippocrates. Incredible scientific leaps have been made since then, from radiotherapy to new cancer drugs. But we still have a long way to go if we want to beat cancer for future generations. Today, half of us will hear the words “you have cancer” in our lifetimes. It’s a startling figure, but luckily more of us are beating the disease than ever before. Cancer survival has doubled in the past 40 years – and it’s thanks in part to the 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses funded by Cancer Research UK.



Making history

Radiotherapy is a vital cancer treatment that uses radiation to destroy cancer cells. Today, it helps cure more people than cancer drugs, and around 30% of UK cancer patients today receive radiotherapy as part of their treatment. If you have a loved one who has had cancer, cared for someone with cancer or battled the disease yourself, you'll be aware of just how crucial this treatment can be, but you may not know Cancer Research UK played a big part in its creation.

The Imperial Cancer Research Fund (ICRF) merged with The Cancer Research Campaign to form Cancer Research UK in 2002. Back in 1904, ICRF was the first to test using radium bromide to treat tumours in mice one of the earliest examples of research into radiotherapy in the lab. Later in the 1930s, the charity funded radiotherapy pioneers Hal Gray and William Valentine Mayneord, who helped to show how cancer cells respond to radiation. Since then radiotherapy has continued to improve: it's now more precise and less damaging to healthy cells. And more breakthroughs could be just around the corner.

Cancer Research UK aims to see 3 in 4 people surviving cancer for ten years or more by 2034

10 YEAR SURVIVAL
1970
24%
2010
50%
WITHIN 20 YEARS
75%

Leading the way

Cancer Research UK has created a new, bold vision for the future of radiotherapy. Imagine being able to accurately target a lung cancer tumour that moves as a patient breathes. This is the kind of life-saving work that Cancer Research UK is doing. The charity is also using data from previous patients to observe patterns and make predictions that could help personalise treatment in the future. On top of this, it is also creating a network of Centres of Excellence across the UK, which will focus on radiation research. Cancer Research UK can't do this alone though it needs your help.

Beating cancer together

More than a third of Cancer Research UK's funding comes from gifts in Wills they're a vital part of the fight against cancer and without these, a lot of the charity's life-saving research simply wouldn't happen. So, this year, why not make a pledge that will really make a difference? By pledging to leave a gift in your Will, you could help transform cancer treatment for thousands of people across the UK. Cancer Research UK receives no funding from the government and it's the only charity fighting all 200 cancer types, so every penny really does count.

Why should you pledge?

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Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666), and the Isle of Man (1103) and Jersey (247)

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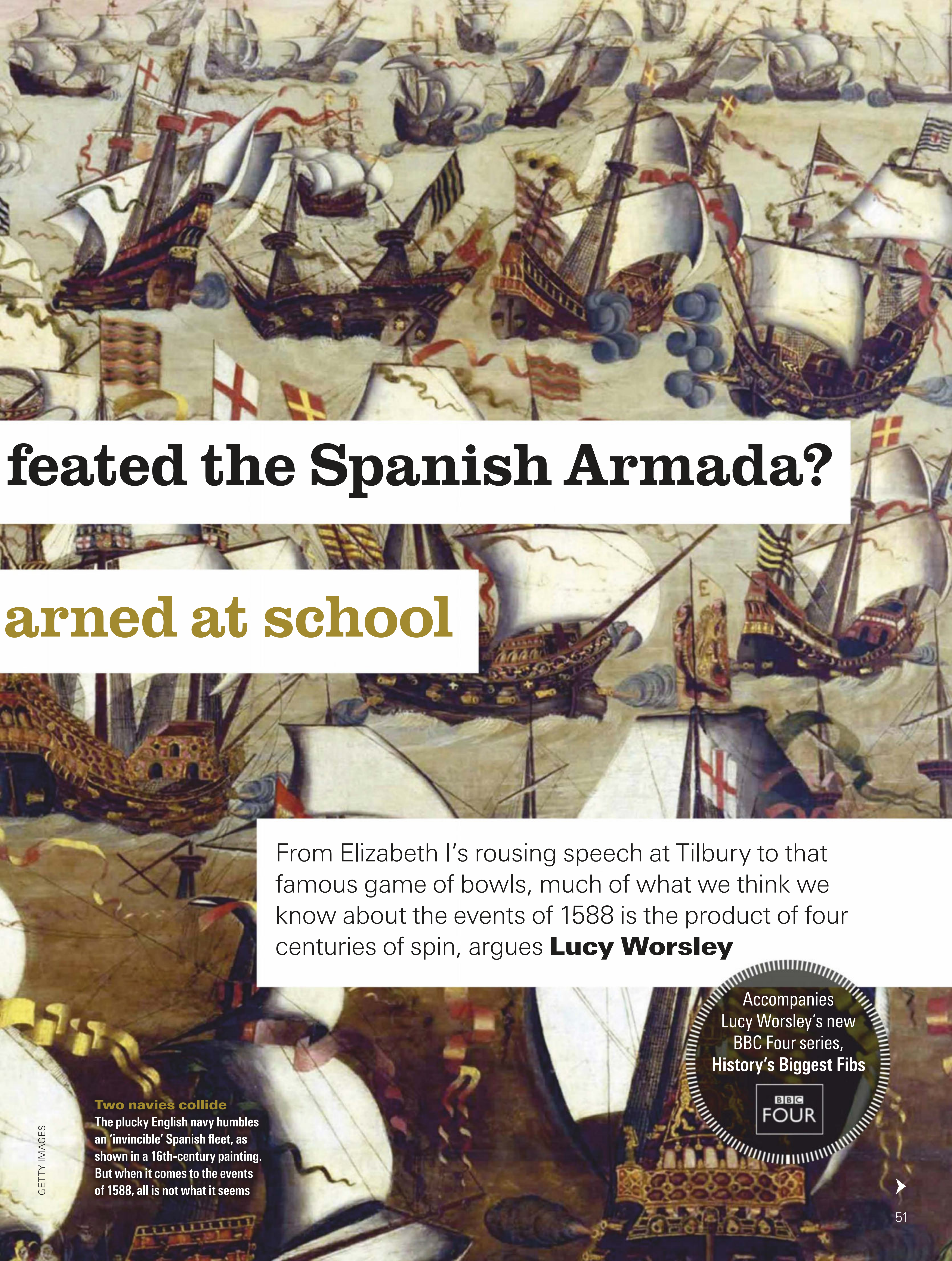

feated the Spanish Armada?

arned at school

From Elizabeth I's rousing speech at Tilbury to that famous game of bowls, much of what we think we know about the events of 1588 is the product of four centuries of spin, argues **Lucy Worsley**

Accompanies
Lucy Worsley's new
BBC Four series,
History's Biggest Fibs

BBC FOUR

Two navies collide
The plucky English navy humbles an 'invincible' Spanish fleet, as shown in a 16th-century painting. But when it comes to the events of 1588, all is not what it seems

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rake's against-
e-odds victory is
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urope and won

In a world where thousands of opinions are competing for our attention, we like to think of history books speaking with one clear voice to tell us the definitive truth about the past. But it's not like that at all. In the latest series of *History's Biggest Fibs*, airing on BBC Four this month, we explore some of the past's best-known stories to see just how they have been spun over the centuries.

One of the stopping-off points in the usual story of England's journey towards becoming a global superpower with a world-class navy is the so-called defeat of the 'invincible' Spanish Armada in 1588.

The quotation marks are used advisedly, for all is not as it seems.

The schoolgirl version of the story is that Philip II of Spain, deadly foe of Elizabeth I of England, sent his huge Armada of ships to invade England and return it to the Catholic faith, only to be defeated by the plucky little English navy, whose courageous captains included Sir Francis Drake.

Drake's celebrated against-the-odds victory is often depicted as the moment that England took on Europe and won. For example, here's Winston Churchill during the Battle of Britain: "We must regard the next week or so as a very important period in our history. It ranks with the days when the Spanish Armada was approaching the Channel, and Drake was finishing his game of bowls…"

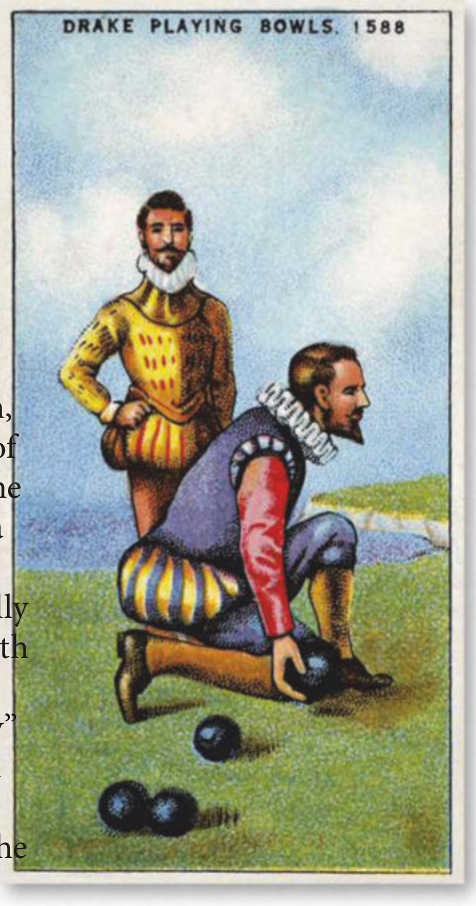
Yet that game of bowls is problematic. You probably have the idea that it was while Drake was enjoying a game on the greens of Plymouth Hoe that the Spanish Armada was first sighted on the horizon. The usual story has Sir Francis turning to Lord Effingham, commander of the English fleet, and saying that there was no need to hurry, there would be plenty of time to finish the game, and to thrash the Spaniards too. It's deep in our national psyche as a moment of coolness in the face of fire; of the stiff upper lip.

Disappointingly, though, none of the early accounts of the Armada mention anyone playing bowls at all. It was a number of years after the event that one account finally describes sailors in Plymouth in July 1588 "dancing, bowling and making merry" on the shore as the Armada appeared. But it was an irresistibly juicy detail. In the 1730s, a biography of Sir Walter Ralegh tells us that Drake was determined to finish his game – and from then on it became 'history'.

Another strand of the traditional story of the Armada concentrates on the psychodrama between two bitter and personal enemies: Philip II of Spain and Queen Elizabeth I, locked in an existential struggle between their differing religious beliefs.

In 1588, Philip was 61, a devout Catholic and king of the biggest empire in the world, reaching from South America to the Philippines. Elizabeth I was in her 50s, still unmarried, still childless, and ruling over a Protestant England in which Catholic plots were a constant threat.

But in 1554, 34 years earlier, Philip had set sail from the northern Spanish port of Corunna in order to become part of the Tudor royal family. We often forget that before he was king of Spain, Philip II – the great villain in the Armada story – spent four years as king of England, due to his marriage to Mary, Elizabeth's older half-sister.



A cigarette card from c1910 shows Drake playing bowls before thrashing the Armada. None of the early accounts make any mention of this incident

Mary was desperate to secure England's future as a Catholic country, and dreaded the thought that she might die childless and leave the Protestant Elizabeth to take the throne. But Philip felt differently. The alternative to Elizabeth, in the event of his and Mary's marriage producing no children, was Mary, Queen of Scots. She was Catholic, which was a plus, but – due to her ancestry and powerful ties to the French court – she would have taken England firmly into the orbit of Philip's French enemies, which was intolerable.

So Philip rooted for his sister-in-law, persuading Mary to release Elizabeth from the house arrest under which she had been placed. When Mary lay dying, Philip realised that the only way he could persuade Elizabeth to support Catholics was to marry her, and get her to convert. And so he proposed.

Elizabeth, as ever, refused to commit herself. A few months later, hearing that Philip had started new negotiations with a French princess, she said (and this is classic Elizabeth I) that he couldn't have loved her all that much if he couldn't wait a month or two for an answer. Although the proposed match failed to materialise, Elizabeth and Philip remained friends. But over the next decade, as Elizabeth and her nation became decidedly Protestant, there were rumblings from Rome. In the late 1560s, Catholics in the north of England attempted an unsuccessful rebellion. To encourage them, in 1570 the pope excommunicated their queen.

Philip was now under pressure from Rome to topple Elizabeth. But with his vast empire to run, he had plenty of other priorities. Although films – notably *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, directed by Shekhar Kapur – often show Philip as some sort of God-crazed psychopath, religion alone wasn't a strong enough reason for Philip to invade England. Two other factors tipped his hand: firstly, Drake's raids on Spanish ships, which Philip saw as piracy. Then there was Elizabeth's support of Philip's rebellious Protestant subjects in the Netherlands. This finally goaded Philip into planning his Armada.

Invincibility myth

The Spanish fleet that Philip assembled is usually depicted as an 'invincible' Goliath to England's little David of a navy. In reality, it was anything but. It wasn't even the biggest fleet ever to have attacked England: the Norman invasion fleet of 1066, and the French force that crossed the Channel in 1545 and sank the *Mary Rose*, both boasted more vessels.

The Spanish had around 130 ships – from war galleons to messenger vessels and provision boats. Although the English navy was smaller, a host of merchant and private boats were commandeered to create a force equal to that of the Spanish.

And, anyway, the invasion fleet had sailed into trouble long before it had an opportunity to engage its English foes. Soon after departing from Lisbon, they faced disease, rotting

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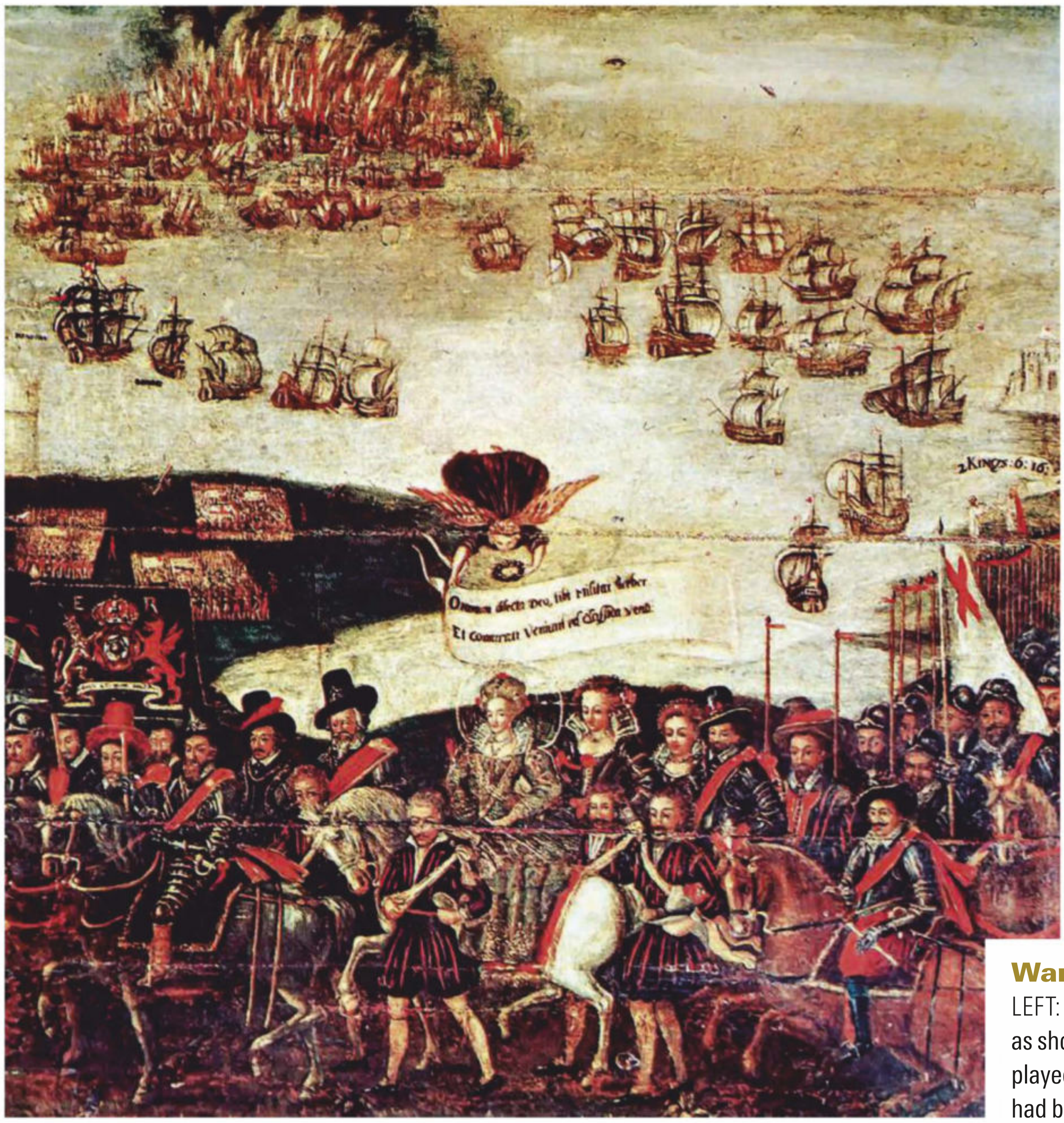
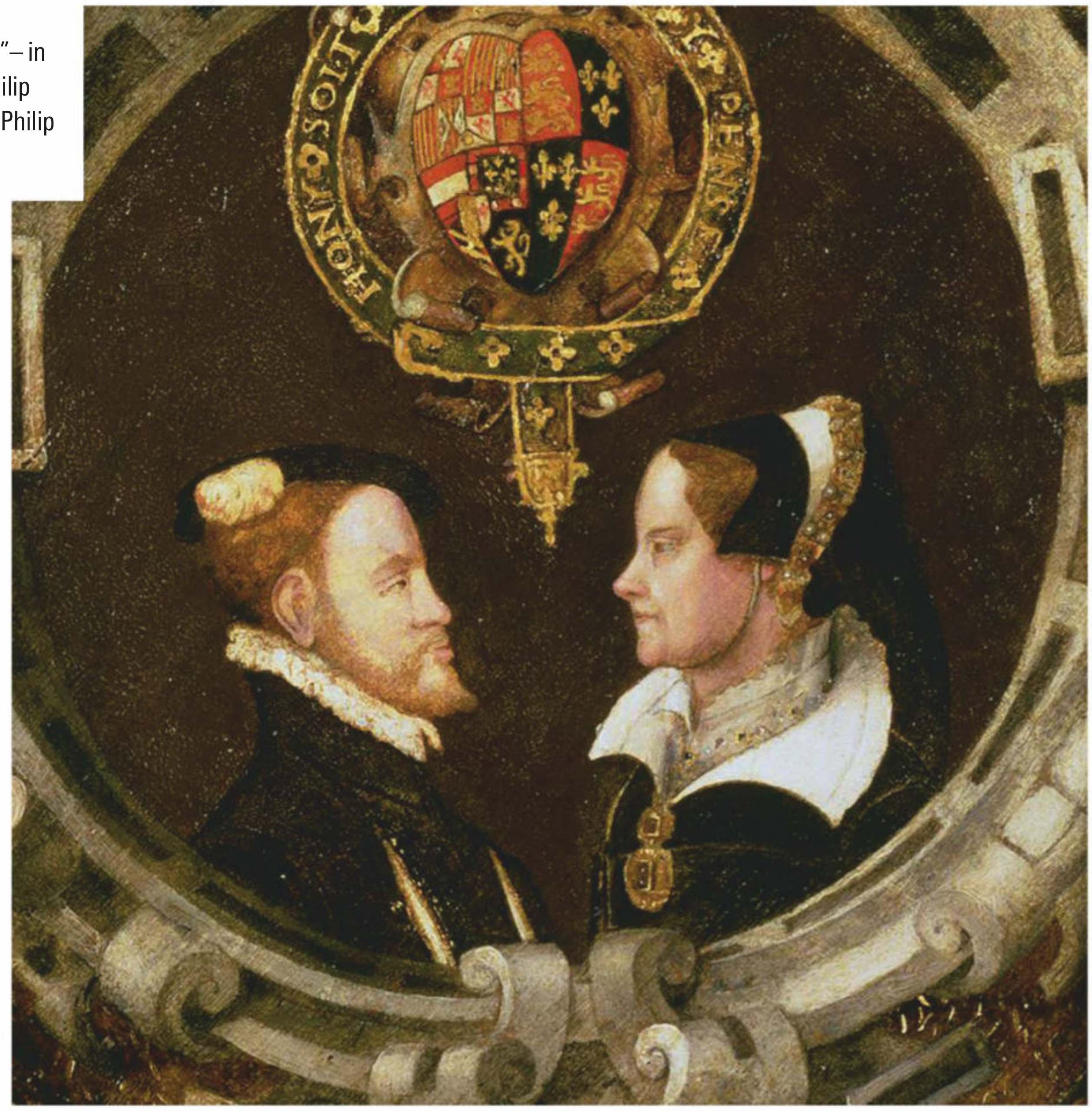


War of words

LEFT: Elizabeth I arrives in Tilbury to deliver a speech to her troops, as shown in a painting. By the time Flora Robson (above right) played the Virgin Queen in 1937's *Fire Over England*, that speech had become a touchstone of English history

False impressions

BELOW: Jordi Mollà plays Philip II – a "God-crazed psychopath" – in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007) RIGHT: A c1555 painting of Philip and his wife, Mary I of England. For all his religious conviction, Philip proposed to the Protestant Elizabeth I following Mary's death



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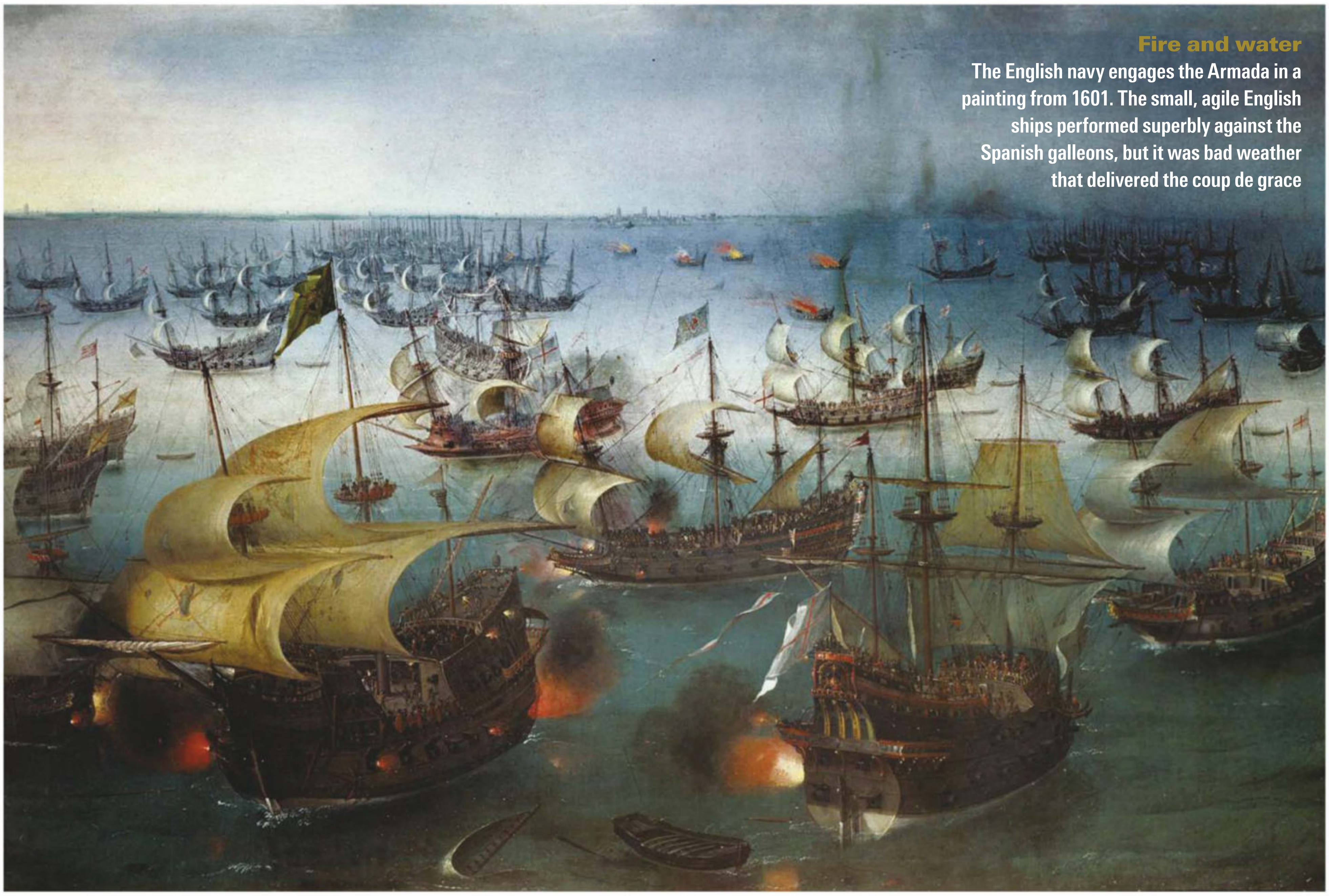
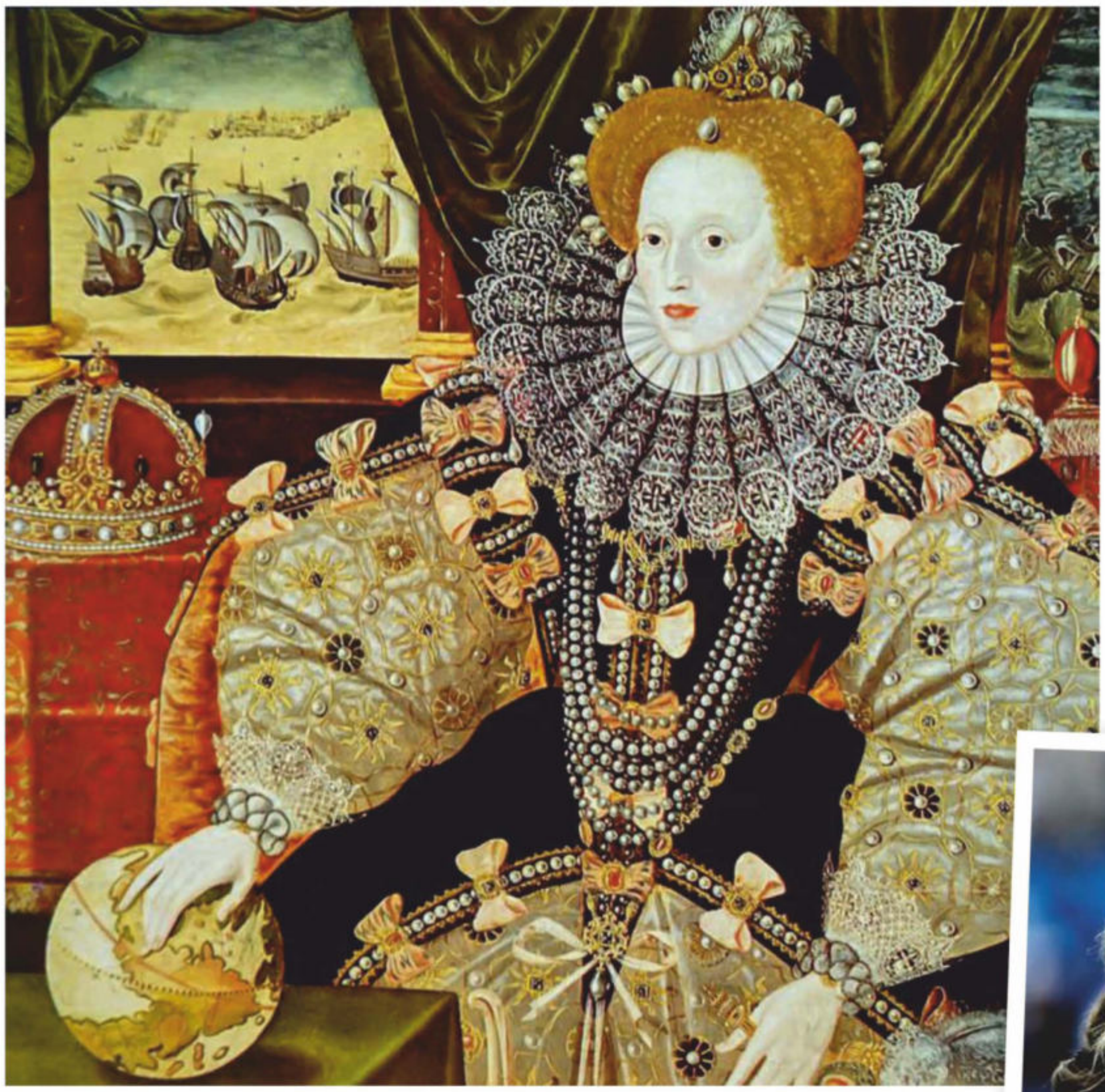


Fire and water

The English navy engages the Armada in a painting from 1601. The small, agile English ships performed superbly against the Spanish galleons, but it was bad weather that delivered the coup de grace



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Margaret Thatcher – who invoked the defeat of the Armada in a note to General Pinochet – meets an officer aboard HMS *Antrim* during her visit to the Falkland Islands in 1983

Savouring victory

ABOVE: The *Armada Portrait* of c1588 shows Elizabeth I surrounded by symbols of imperial majesty. RIGHT: An advertising campaign supporting the Lionesses in the 2019 Women's World Cup was inspired by Elizabeth's famous Tilbury speech provisions and bad weather. They had to stop at Corunna for repairs. From there, the commander of the fleet wrote to Philip, confessing that he could see “hardly any of those on the Armada with any knowledge or ability to perform the duties entrusted to them… we are very weak”.

But Philip said the attack was to go ahead anyway. So off the Armada went, planning to sail up the English Channel towards its narrowest point. There it was to meet with an army of soldiers from the Netherlands led by the Duke of Parma, who were to be ferried across on barges to invade Kent.

First, though, the Spanish had to make it up the Channel, and here they began to experience more problems. The first major casualties they experienced were self-inflicted: a crash and explosion lost them two ships.

Dramatic effect

Once the Spanish were sailing up the Channel, the next narrative beat in most popular retellings of the story is Elizabeth I’s rousing speech to her men at Tilbury on the northern bank of the Thames. That famous piece of oratory – in which the queen tells the assembled troops that she may “have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but the heart and stomach of a king” – has been dramatised in countless films. Elizabeth is often depicted riding a horse, dressed in white velvet, or even in armour. “I myself will be your general,” she tells her men.

But this involves a tweaking to the timing of events for dramatic effect. Elizabeth had come up with the plan to address the troops while the Spanish were still in the Channel. Yet by the time she did so, the Armada were already staring defeat in the face. Eleven days earlier, English fireships had attacked the Spanish fleet while it was waiting off France for its rendezvous with Parma’s army. These burning vessels caused the Spanish to panic, with further crashes and losses. So when Elizabeth uttered her famous words at Tilbury, what was left of the Armada was on its way home, running up around Scotland and Ireland to get back to Spain. And there, in the north, the death knell was dealt to Spanish plans: not by Drake, Elizabeth I or brave English sailors – but by bad weather.

Interestingly, the content as well as the timing of Elizabeth’s speech has also ‘evolved’ over time. The sources don’t mention the famous “heart and stomach of a king” line until more than three decades after the event. It was first introduced by a Protestant chaplain who had been at Tilbury – and it sounds like just the sort of thing Elizabeth would have said. But historians cannot be sure that she really used those very words.

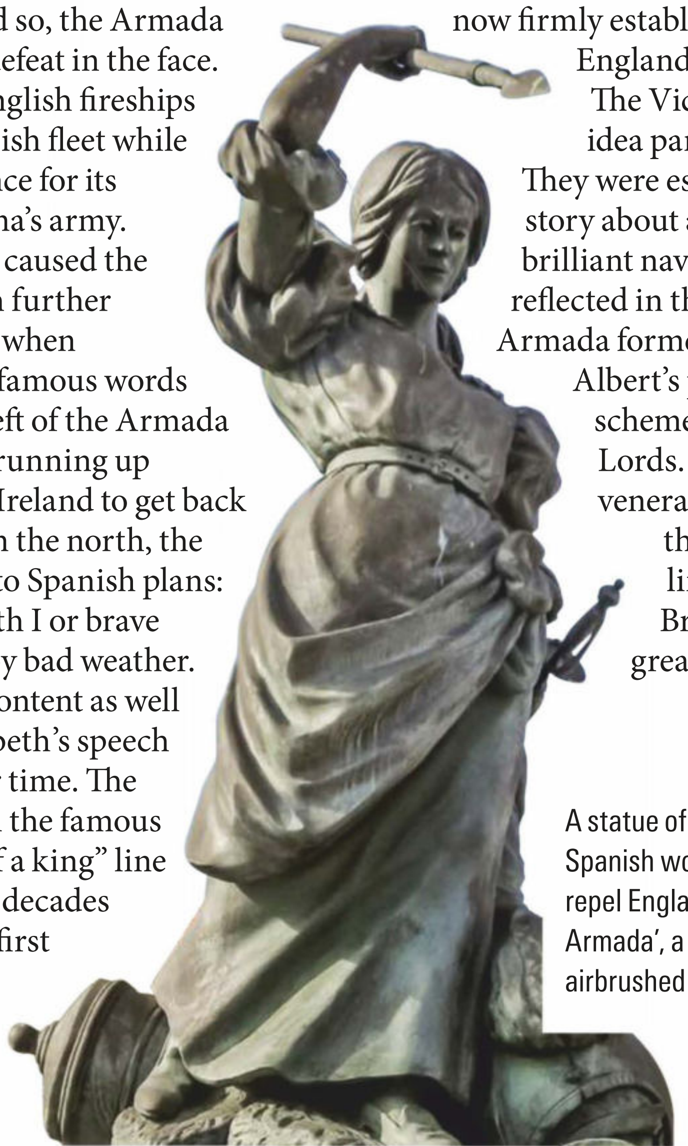
> **The Spanish never saw the Armada as a great defeat, because they soon exacted revenge on the English navy**

Does that matter? Tilbury has become a touchstone of history, not because of the facts, but because of the emotion it inspires. Shortly before the Second World War, when the actor Flora Robson, playing Elizabeth I, delivered the speech in the 1937 film *Fire Over England*, she was really talking about the feared Nazi invasion. Eight decades later, Elizabeth’s words were employed again – this time to sell feminism, football and beer as part of a Budweiser advertising campaign throwing its support behind the England Lionesses in the 2019 Women’s World Cup.

As these examples prove, the idea that Elizabeth, Drake and underdog pluck defeated a practically invincible Armada is now firmly established at the heart of England’s conception of itself. The Victorians found this idea particularly appealing. They were especially drawn to a story about a nation with a brilliant navy – something that’s reflected in the fact that the Armada formed part of Prince Albert’s planned decorative scheme for the House of Lords. But, for all the veneration of Drake and co, there was no straight line from 1588 to Britain’s imperial greatness in the 18th and 19th centuries. For one thing, the defeat of the Armada didn’t bring victory in the war with Spain; in fact, that conflict dragged on into the 17th century.

For another, the Spanish themselves never really saw the Armada as a significant setback. And that’s because, in 1589, the English suffered an embarrassing naval disaster of their own. That year, Drake led a so-called ‘Counter Armada’, with the aim of destroying the remainder of Philip’s fleet while it was under repair in Santander. It was a fiasco, in which 15,000 Englishmen died, and many of the 86 ships were lost.

Drake and his fleet were forced – just like Philip II’s own fleet a year earlier – to stop at Corunna for lack of provisions. And here, a local woman, Maria Pita, led fierce resistance against the English navy. Still celebrated as a heroine in Corunna, Pita is said to have killed an English soldier herself, thereby inspiring the town to victory. In another football connection, she has become a symbol of the local women’s team.


A statue of Maria Pita, the Spanish woman who helped repel England’s ‘Counter Armada’, a debacle that has been airbrushed out of English history

DREAMSTIME

Someone should have told Margaret Thatcher about the ‘Counter Armada’. When Spain tried, unsuccessfully, to extradite the Chilean dictator General Pinochet from Britain for human rights abuses, the British prime minister sprang to the defence of the man who’d supported her during the Falklands War. She sent him a silver plate commemorating the English victory over the Spanish Armada, with a note decrying Spanish colonialism.

Thatcher herself had often been photographed among her troops during the Falklands conflict, yet always appeared hyper-feminine in her personal style. She had learned a way of being a female war leader from Elizabeth I – to be womanly, yet to deny that gender mattered.

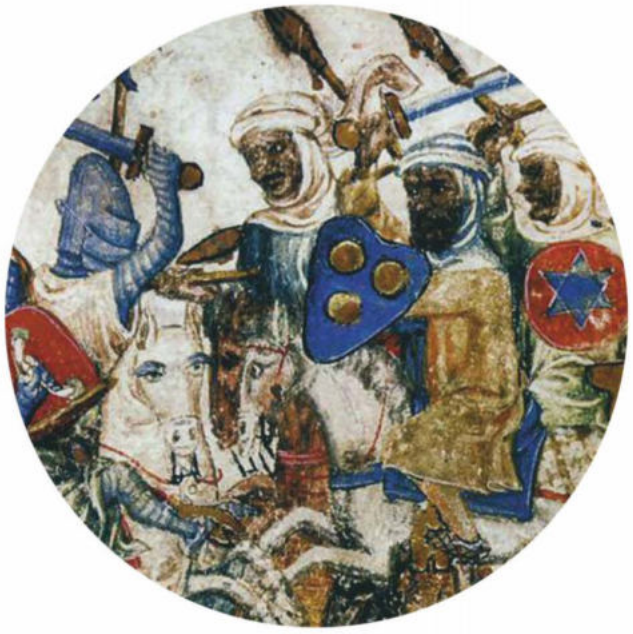
The legend of the Spanish Armada created by the Elizabethans and retold by generations after them has a powerful legacy. In times of crisis – from the Second World War to the Falklands – it’s been used to convince us that this small island can take on superpowers; that we come from a long line of cool-headed and inspirational leaders; that, small as we are, we can still play a mighty role on the world stage.

The popular version of the story of the Armada – true or not – gives us confidence to believe in that fantasy. Who knows where this impressive mingling of facts, fantasy and fibs might take us next? H

Lucy Worsley is chief curator at Historic Royal Palaces. The Spanish Armada is one of the topics she’ll be covering in her new three part series, *History’s Biggest Fibs*, which is due to air on BBC Four in February

Henry II: the Muslim monarch?

In the 12th century, furious with the archbishop of Canterbury, England's King Henry II threatened to forsake Christianity for Islam. But how serious was he? And what would have happened if he'd actually converted? **Claudia Gold** investigates



Best of enemies

Christians and Muslims battle at the siege of Antioch during the First Crusade. But Islam's rich intellectual tradition won plenty of admiration in medieval Europe

In the spring of 1168, Henry II, King of England, wrote to Pope Alexander III. While correspondence between monarch and pontiff was a matter of course, this letter was notable for the menace it projected. For Henry was threatening to convert to Islam.

It was not unusual for Henry to issue threats: they were fundamental to his arsenal of kingship, as vital as his carefully calculated thunderous outbursts, his diplomacy, the legendary speed at which he drove his armies and his unsurpassable siege warfare in inspiring awe among his adversaries. Henry did not discriminate between the recipients of his threats, from the pope to the lowly electors of Winchester, whom he once ordered to "hold a free election" but forbade "to elect anyone but Richard my clerk".

But this was of a different order altogether. Since 1097, European crusaders had been fighting the forces of Islam in the Middle East and tenaciously hanging on to their conquests: the kingdom of Jerusalem, the principality of Antioch, the counties of Edessa and Tripoli. Muslims were seen as Christendom's enemies.

Moreover, Henry was not simply King of England: he was also the Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, Count of Maine, Anjou and Touraine, master of vast swathes of France. One of the world's most powerful men, he held sway from the Scottish borders to the Middle East, where his uncles ruled the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem. If Henry was serious, the ramifications across 12th-century Europe would be seismic.

Could this, then, have been more than Henry's characteristic bombast? Is it possible that he meant what he said?

Henry was familiar with Islam. He would have studied the works of Petrus Alfonsi, physician to his grandfather Henry I, who wrote the earliest credible account of Muhammad, as well as Peter the Venerable, who ordered the first translation of the Qur'an into Latin. Although he saw Islam as a heresy, Peter thought it the greatest of all heresies – the one that most deserved to be answered.

Alongside Islam, Henry also developed an admiration for Arabic learning from an early age. He had received an outstanding education from scholars versed in the 'new' knowledge that was exploding out of Sicily, Spain and the Middle East. Western Europe had never experienced such an intellectually exciting period as the 12th century – later dubbed the 12th-century renaissance – fed

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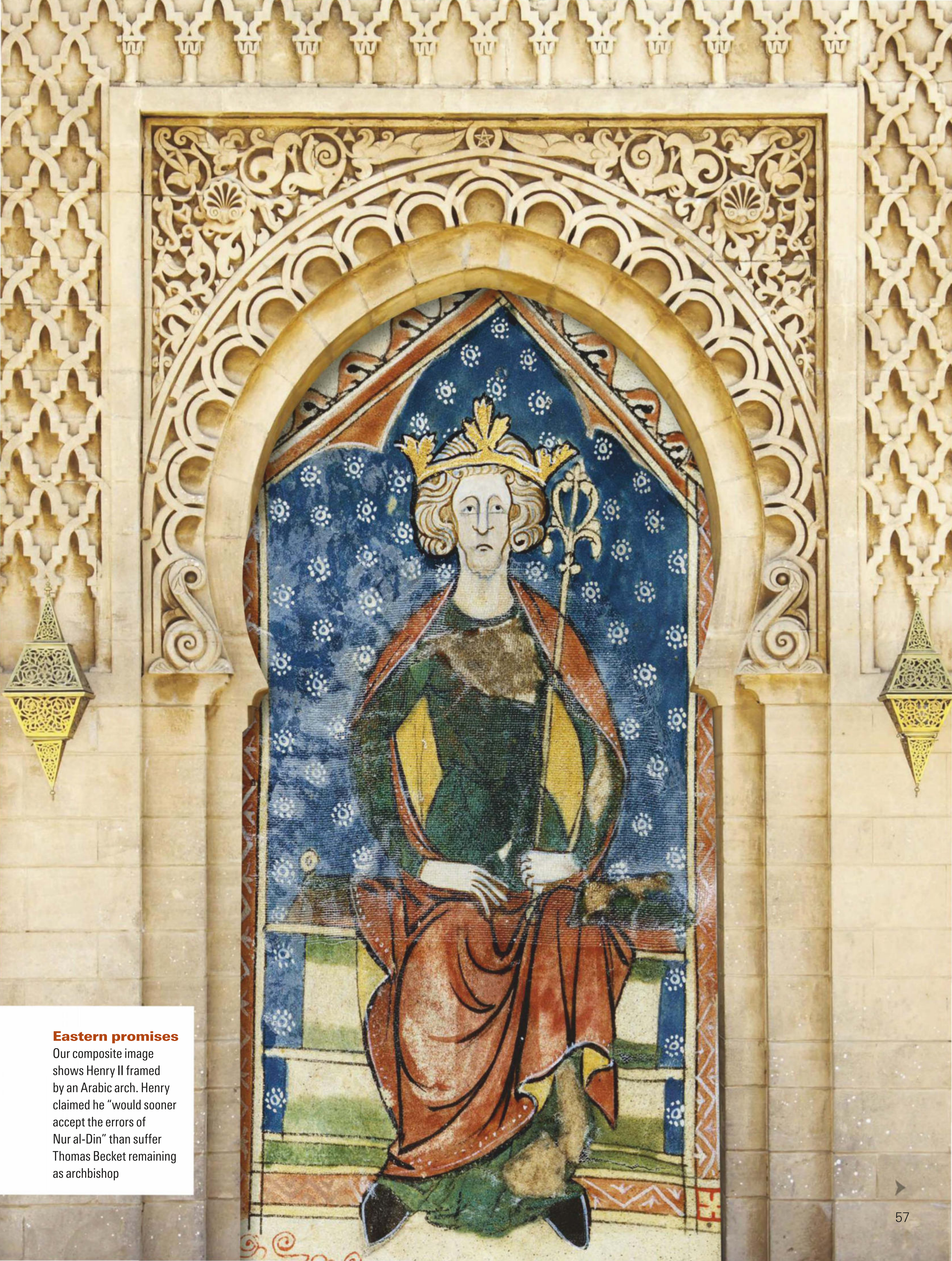


Eastern promises
Our composite image shows Henry II framed by an Arabic arch. Henry claimed he "would sooner accept the errors of Nur al-Din" than suffer Thomas Becket remaining as archbishop

by a rediscovery of the classical thinkers of Greece and Rome (particularly Christian Rome after Constantine's conversion), and by contact with the Arab world and its rich intellectual tradition in astronomy, medicine, music, architecture and mathematics.

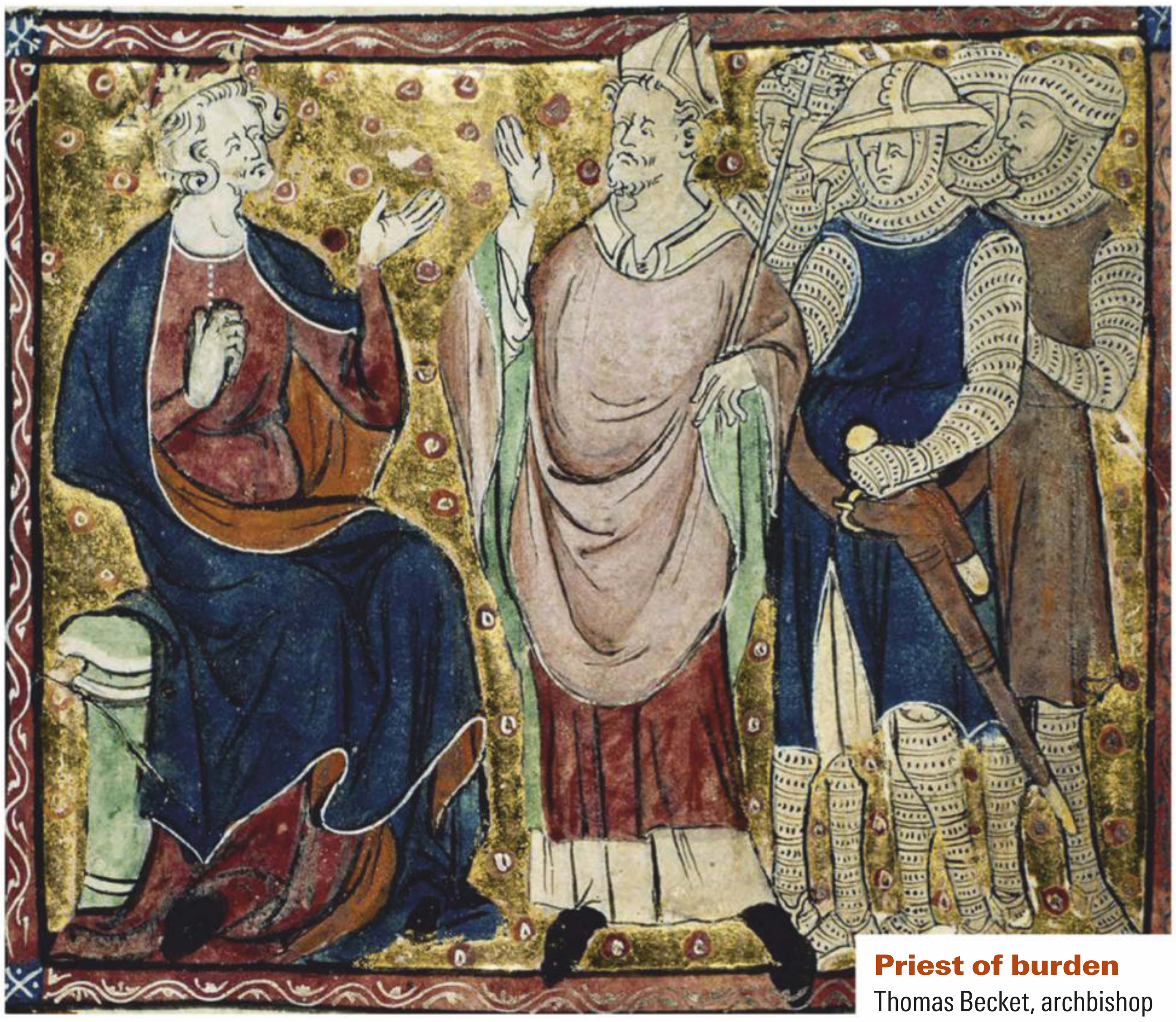
Henry's parents – heeding the lesson from the monk William of Malmesbury that "a king without letters is [just] an ass with a crown" – had hired the best tutors in Europe. Among them was the renowned Arabist, linguist and scientist Adelard of Bath, who had a profound impact on Henry's education. Adelard had travelled for seven years in Italy, Sicily, Antioch and the southern coast of what would become Turkey, dedicating himself to the 'studies of the Arabs'. He was famed for his translations into Latin of Arabic treatises on astronomy, and introducing Arabic innovations in mathematics into England and France. Adelard dedicated *De opera astrolapsus* – his work on the Arabic innovation of the astrolabe – to Henry.

Henry's interest continued into adulthood. He welcomed travelling scholars, not least Arab ones, to his courts. He knew enough about Arabic learning to request specific texts from diplomats travelling to Sicily and the kingdom of Jerusalem. And Henry admired the Islamic arts so much that when he built a palace for his mistress Rosamund Clifford, at Woodstock, he mimicked the palaces of the Norman kingdom in Sicily, with fountains and courtyards. The palace was later destroyed but its style, abounding in Arabic motifs, was unique in northern Europe.

Five weary years

So much for the king's high regard for Islam and Arabic culture. But what was it that provoked Henry to make the threat in the first place? The answer is to be found in Henry's letter, where he tells Pope Alexander he "would sooner accept the errors of Nur al-Din [the Sultan of Aleppo] and become an infidel, than suffer Thomas [Becket] to hold sway in Canterbury Cathedral any longer".

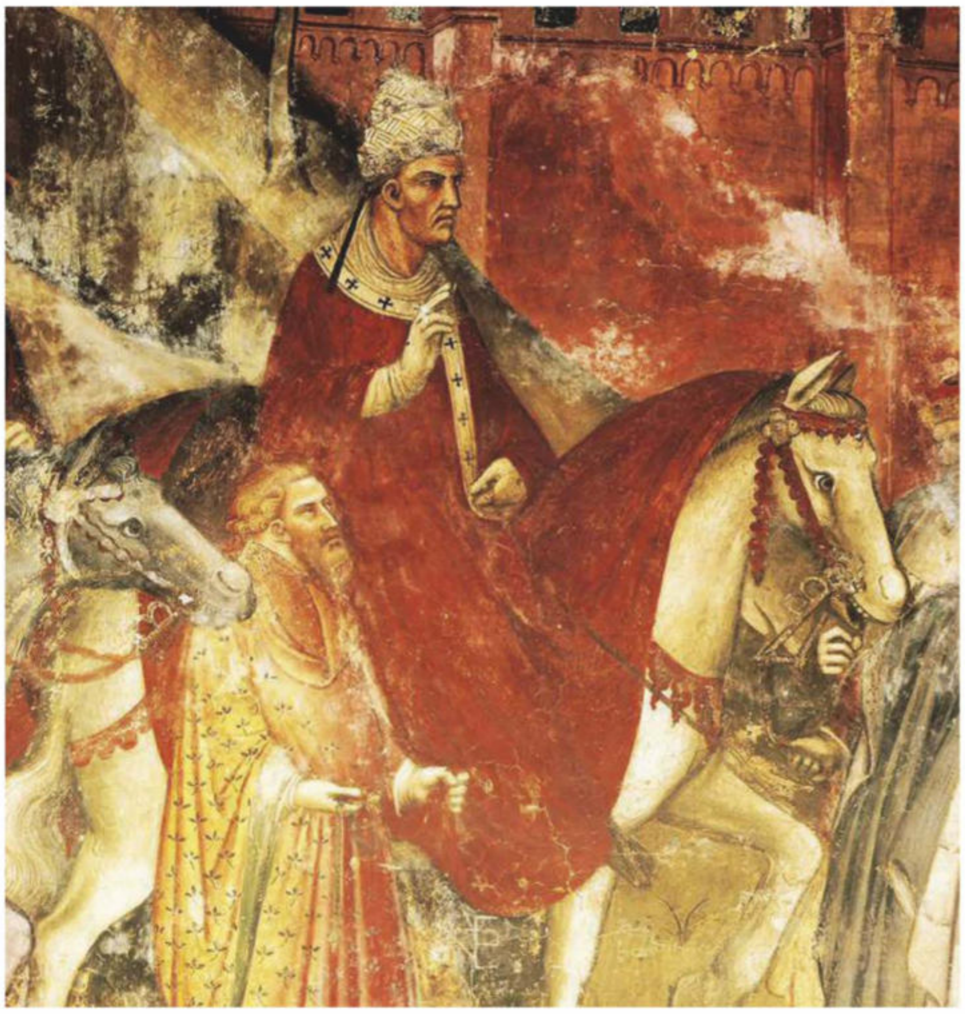
Now things become a little clearer: it is 1168, and Henry's row with his erstwhile friend Thomas Becket is in its fifth weary year. Henry had raised Thomas high, appointing him to the position of chancellor soon after his accession. He was "considered second only to the king". Henry had such faith in Thomas to do his bidding that after Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, died in 1161, he strong-armed a reluctant Becket into taking up the dual position of chancellor-archbishop, despite warnings from Henry's mother, the Empress Matilda, and from Thomas himself. Thomas thought it was ludicrous, protesting that Henry and he knew



Priest of burden
Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, conversing with Henry in a 14th-century manuscript. The two friends fell out over the church's role

Becket knew that Henry's father had castrated some of his clergy for their disobedience. Petrified, he fled to France

Horse trading
Pope Alexander III returns to Rome. Becket's row with Henry, who supported the pope in his exile, put Alexander in a tricky position



BRIDGEMAN

"for certain that if I am ever promoted to that dignity, I will have to forfeit either the king's favour or… my service to God Almighty".

Henry ignored all objections, paying no heed to his mother and even threatening the monks of Canterbury (who did not want Thomas as their archbishop) with his anger if they failed to elect his candidate. Henry's primary concern was to ensure the succession by crowning his eldest surviving son in his lifetime. It was his bid to avoid another blood-spattered race to the throne when he died – as had happened at the death of every monarch except Stephen since the Norman conquest. The right to crown the kings of England was the prerogative of the archbishops of Canterbury, and Henry expected Thomas to accede to his desire.

Instead, Henry discovered that he had installed a zealot, a soldier now for the eternal Christ instead of his temporal king. Henry was livid when Thomas resigned the chancellorship; king and archbishop soon became locked in a battle for supremacy between church and state. The balance of compromise, – whereby the kings gave their archbishops dignity and in turn the archbishops sought to please their kings – was torn to shreds.

Thuggish barons

The major source of friction was over which court – the king's or the church's – should govern clerics accused of committing crimes. Henry was concerned that separate ecclesiastical courts operated in tandem to his own, but he was also vexed that the punishments they meted out were negligible. Neither king nor archbishop would budge.

When Henry, seeking to rid himself of Thomas, charged him with contempt of royal authority and embezzlement in 1164, Thomas foresaw his imprisonment, and even death. He was reminded by some of Henry's more thuggish barons that the king's own father, Geoffrey of Anjou, had castrated some of his clergy for their disobedience, forcing them to "carry their members" before him in a basin. Petrified, Thomas fled to the court of Louis VII of France, where he was gleefully offered sanctuary. Louis, the first husband of Henry's wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, was ever pleased to create trouble for his most powerful lord – Henry owed allegiance to the French king for his lands on the continent.

Louis, as pious as Henry was worldly, had offered sanctuary not only to Thomas; he had also given refuge to Pope Alexander III when he had left Rome in 1159 following a split election that resulted in the first in a series of antipopes to occupy the papal throne.

Pope Alexander also owed much to Henry, who had supported him alongside Louis. Alexander needed Henry's backing, and the

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FAITHFUL FRIENDS

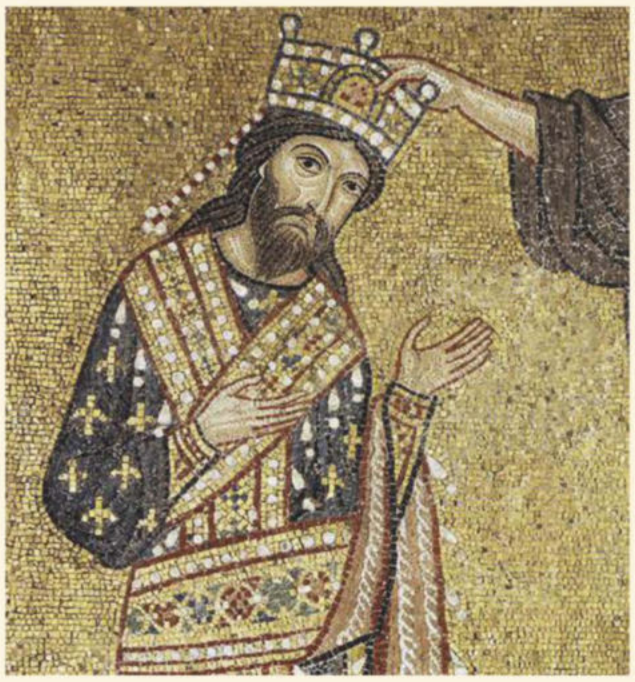
How Muslim and Christian cultures mixed in medieval Europe

Knowledge of Arabic learning reached medieval Europe through three major routes. The first was through Christendom's conquest of the Iberian peninsula from the ninth century. Then there was the First Crusade, which ended in the capture of Jerusalem and establishment of a Latin kingdom, ruled by a Frankish nobility, which would endure for two centuries. (Henry's uncles and cousins were among the rulers.)

Thirdly, in 1130, a Norman mercenary, Count Roger de Hauteville, founded a Norman kingdom in Sicily that would go on to include parts of northern Africa. Close links and even friendships between Christians and Muslims formed, and Christians living in these lands often adopted an Arabised way of life. Christians living similarly in Moorish Iberia were called *Mozarabs*. They continued to practise Christianity, while being beguiled by Muslim culture: It was said that "all the young Christians who become notable for their talents… read and study Arabic books with zeal".

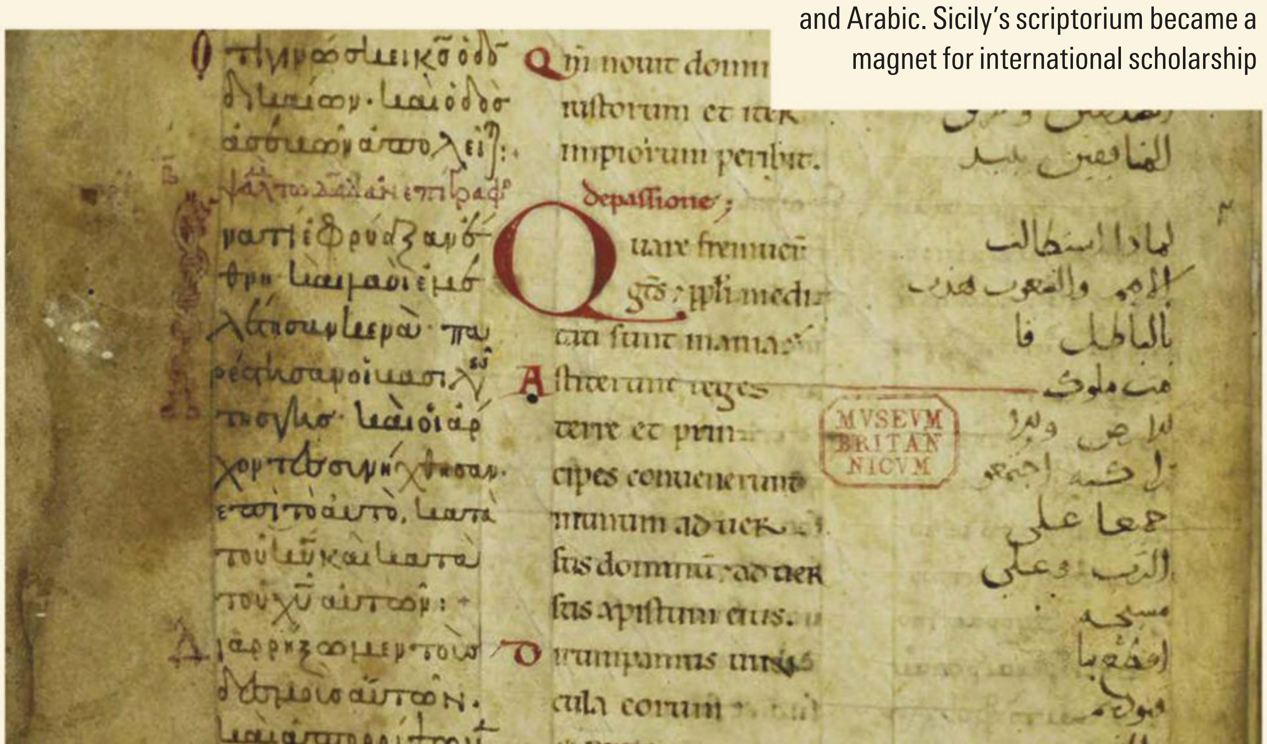
These communities were often marked by tolerance and cooperation. Count Roger and his successors employed Arab advisors, and their reigns fostered an exchange of ideas between Christians and Muslims. Under their rule, Sicily's trilingual scriptorium, a magnet for international scholarship, became a centre where the works of classical scholars, many of them translated into Arabic from the original Greek, were in turn translated into Latin. These were texts that had been 'lost' to European scholarship in the chaos following the disintegration of the western Roman empire in the fifth century.

Sicily, in particular, was a place where all scholars were welcomed regardless of faith, and was the epicentre for the dissemination of Arabic learning in the west. The knowledge of the Arabs erupted out of Muslim lands conquered by Christians – Spain, Sicily and the Latin kingdom – and permeated the cathedral schools of Europe.

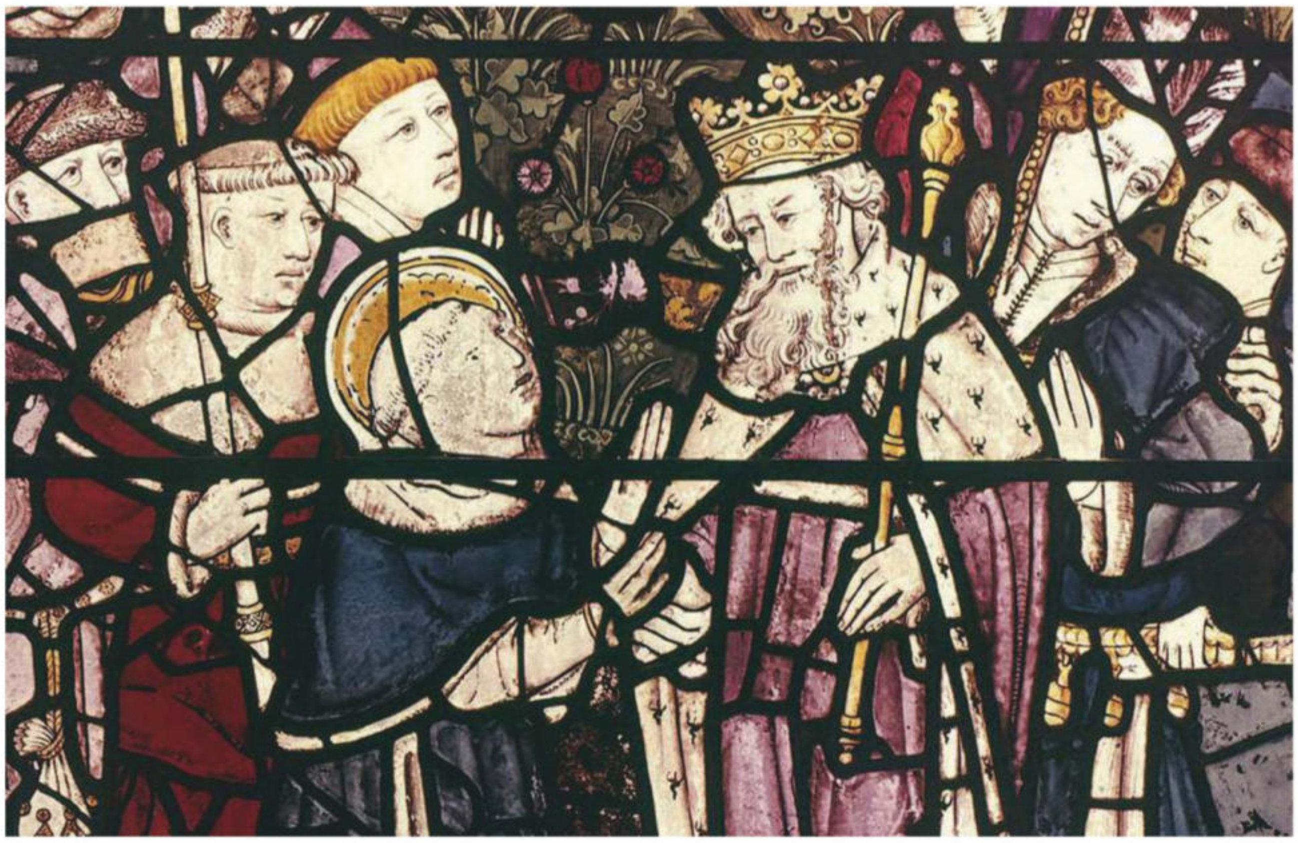


A 12th-century mosaic of Christ crowning King Roger II of Sicily. The Sicilian kings fostered a tolerant society in which Christians often adopted an Arabised way of life

A Mozarabic map from 11th-century Spain shows Adam and Eve beside the city of Jerusalem in an earthly paradise



A trilingual psalter from 12th-century Sicily showing the Psalms in Greek, Latin and Arabic. Sicily's scriptorium became a magnet for international scholarship



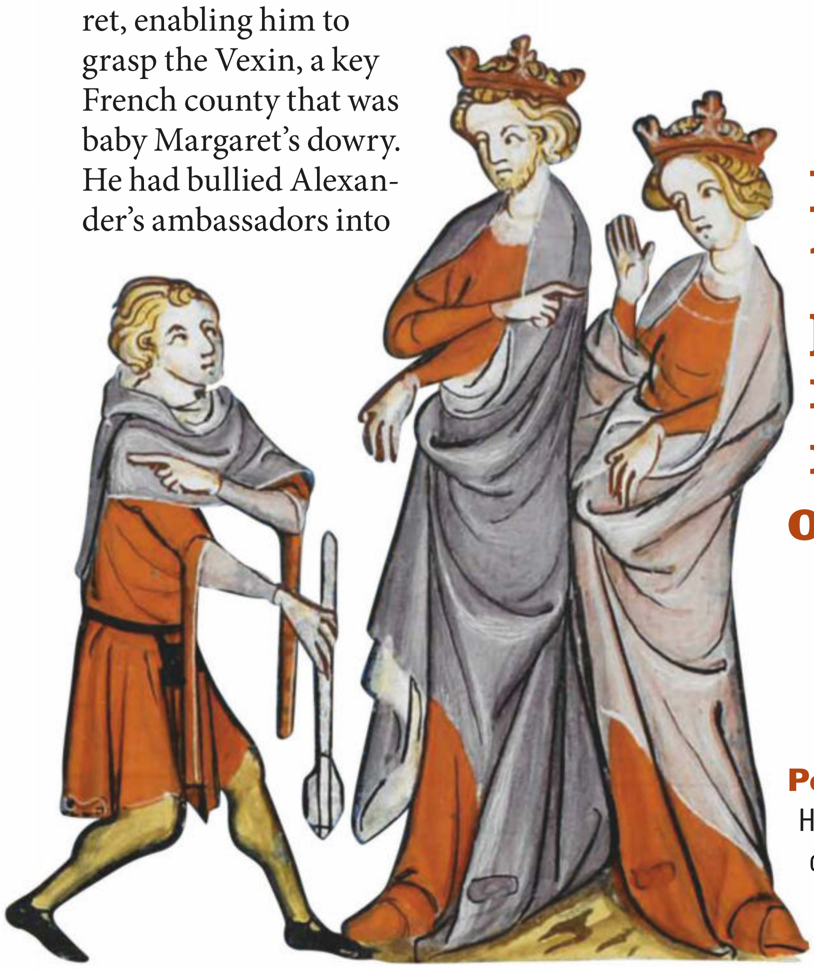
Prayers answered Thomas Becket is received by Louis VII of France as he seeks asylum from the increasingly intolerant English king. As Henry's long-term rival, Louis was only too happy to offer sanctuary

row over Becket put him in an impossible position. Although he may have sympathised with a bitter Thomas, he was compelled to tread a careful path. For the next few years he would procrastinate, even while allowing Thomas to vent about Henry's destruction of the church through his "evil customs". (As it turned out, Becket's fears were justified. He was murdered two years after Henry composed his letter to the pope.)

Henry's conversion threat was a bludgeon, waved before the pope the more forcefully to persuade him to remove Thomas from his post. He had successfully threatened Alexander before. Eight years earlier, he had sought a papal dispensation to allow his five-year-old son to marry Louis's infant daughter Margaret, enabling him to grasp the Vexin, a key French county that was baby Margaret's dowry. He had bullied Alexander's ambassadors into thinking he would back the pope's rival, the antipope Victor IV, if he did not get his way, and Alexander had capitulated. It had worked before, so Henry likely believed the pope would yield again in the face of his outlandish threat. As far as we are aware, however, Alexander did not respond to it directly, but continued to push for negotiations between Henry and Becket.

A man of the world

As to whether Henry would ever have carried out the threat, it is unlikely. A practitioner of realpolitik, he would have been all too aware of the dangers. His hold on power notwithstanding, Henry would not have been able to deny that his divine right to the crown of England sprang from Christianity. Christian society was structured in a very different way to Islam; it was primarily an agrarian and feudal society. Islamic society allowed for a reasonably high level of social mobility and was far less rigid than the Christian west's feudalism. Henry's empire was based on an intricate system of oaths and obligations.



Henry's conversion to Islam would presumably have required the mass conversion of all his people

Political realist Henry (left) and his daughter-in-law Margaret of France receive an envoy. The king knew that converting would have meant giving up his divine right to the crown

Henry's conversion would presumably have required the mass conversion of all the different peoples in the lands under his rule, from Northumberland to Aquitaine. The administrative implications alone would have been immense. What would have become of the thousands of bishops and priests? Would Arabic have replaced Latin as the lingua franca? Would there have been a new curriculum in the universities? Would Henry have developed Arabic rather than English law? With which caliphates would he have forged his new alliances? What would have been the effect on the crusades?

Consider the hundreds of years of chaos sparked by Henry's descendant, the eighth Henry, with his separation of England from the Roman Catholic church – chaos that resulted in civil war and the eventual execution of a king. We can only imagine the bedlam that would have ensued had Henry II converted to Islam. Conversions in both directions did happen, particularly in the marchlands where Christianity and Islam met – but the converts were not kings or queens. Such an undertaking would have been beyond the diplomatic and administrative talents of even a king as exceptional as Henry II.

If there is anything to learn about Henry from the episode, it is perhaps that he cared far more for the temporal than the divine. Although a superstitious man, Henry was not a religious one. The chroniclers railed against his lack of piety, claiming that he never sat still in church. Henry found himself so bored at mass that he doodled and met petitioners. His threat to convert to Islam is indicative of how little religion meant to him and, as a result, how much he resented papal authority when it stood in his way. For all the reasons that Islam may have appealed to Henry, one of the most attractive would surely have been that, unlike Christianity, it had no centralised authority, no supranational power. How gratifying the thought: no Muslim pope to bar him from sacking his own archbishop. H

Claudia Gold is a historian, and author of *King of the North Wind: The Life of Henry II in Five Acts* (William Collins, 2018)

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A global education

From participating in French strikes to being inspired by some of India's most formidable thinkers, we asked a group of historians to share their recollections of student life in four different countries across the world

"At my university in Switzerland, students rather than their tutors decided when they were ready to take an exam"

Frank Dikötter

What was life like as a history student in Switzerland?
I wasn't exactly a model school student – I spent a great deal of time in detention, so when I announced my decision to go to university, my family and friends found it rather amusing. But once I got there I did well, mainly because I was left alone, with no teachers looking over my shoulder to tell me what to do. Attendance in many cases was not even obligatory. Students, rather than their tutors, decided when they were ready to take an exam. I used the opportunity to read widely and voraciously.

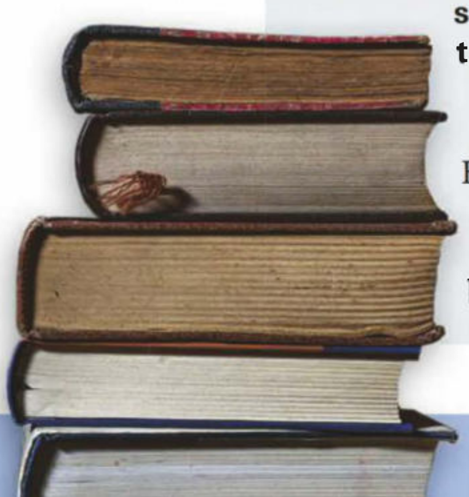
What was the most interesting topic you studied?
I read Russian literature and fell in love with Dostoyevsky. But I also majored in history, and reading primary sources was emphasised from the beginning.

In the first year we were taken to the city archives, and later I discovered the League of Nations archives. So it was not so much a topic as a type of material I enjoyed. There is nothing quite like the magic of being pulled back in time through contact with original documents.
I remain a firm believer in evidence-based research, as opposed to a theory-driven approach, and I owe this largely to my teachers at the University of Geneva and their willingness to let me roam at large.

Are there any aspects of studying in Switzerland that might surprise UK readers?
I spent some 20 years at SOAS University of London, and could never quite comprehend the narrow focus on 'essay writing', as the same set of skills was tested over and over again. The University of Geneva has a whole range of methods to examine its students, including oral tests, timed library work and research papers. The result is a much more rounded set of skills, including the ability to actually stand up and speak.

What advice would you give to someone who is studying in Switzerland?
Don't faff about – use your freedom to dig in.

Frank Dikötter is chair professor of humanities at the University of Hong Kong



Timed library work formed a key part of Frank Dikötter's Swiss studies

"History in India is still very much alive. Every aspect of present-day life there feels shaped by the past"

Prashant Kidambi

What was life like as a history student in India?
It was a mixed bag. As an undergraduate in Hyderabad, I was taught in a very traditional manner. The emphasis was on remembering facts to repeat in exams. My masters, at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, was a completely different experience. Some of India's best historians were there – inspiring individuals with formidable minds. Emphasis was placed on critical thinking, and you were pushed to rethink the way you read, wrote and researched.

What was the most interesting topic you studied?
Environmental history was coming into vogue in India when I was a student. I also took a fascinating module on the Russian Revolution – a subject that continues to interest me.

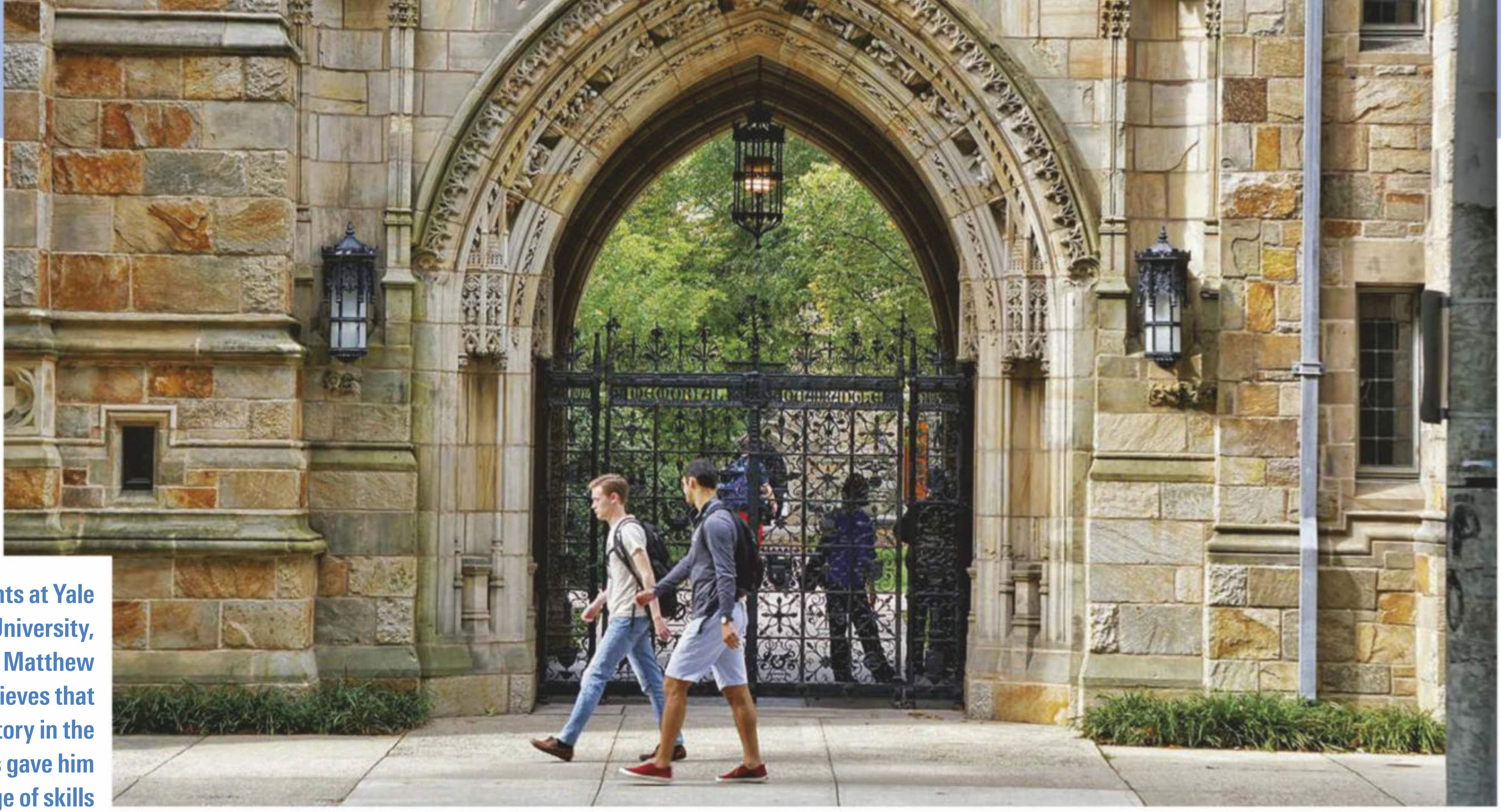
Are there any aspects of studying in India that might surprise readers in the UK?
History in India is not something that is dead and buried and can be consumed as heritage – it's still very much alive. Every aspect of life in present-day India feels shaped by the past, and there are fierce debates over the interpretation of that past. For example, what happened to a mosque in the 16th century can be a source of fierce conflict in the present.

India is vast, so its history is massively diverse, complex and layered. Telling the 'history of India' in a straightforward or singular way is pretty much impossible.

What would your advice be to anyone studying in India?
Be warned that it might not always be easy to access resources, as many archives are facing a huge crunch in terms of upkeep and finances. You need to be patient. Having some knowledge of Indian languages would also be immensely helpful, as it would allow you to tap into a wider range of historical materials.

Prashant Kidambi is associate professor in colonial urban history at the University of Leicester

ALAMY



Students at Yale University, Connecticut. Matthew Lockwood believes that studying history in the United States gave him a broad range of skills

“As an undergraduate in the United States, you need to be prepared to study a wide variety of fields beyond history”

Matthew Lockwood

What was life like as a history student in the United States?
As an undergraduate, I was initially frustrated by the broad liberal arts approach of most American universities. I knew I wanted to study history and maybe even pursue a career in the field, so I bristled at requirements that dictated that I must take classes in science, maths, literature, foreign languages and other subjects. Though at the time I wanted to be able to focus on history alone, in hindsight I'm grateful that my undergraduate education provided such a broad range of skills, perspectives and methodologies.

What was the most interesting topic you studied?
I had grown up with the familiar stories of American history, so I was thrilled to be able to study such diverse topics as the French Revolution, Korea, Jewish history and the Middle East. Perhaps most revelatory was a class on the Indian Ocean world, which opened up my eyes to a transnational history free from the artificial borders of nation-states. As a graduate student, I gravitated towards social history because recovering the lived experience of the everyday people of the past still seems like magic.

Are there any aspects of studying in the US that might surprise readers in the UK?
Most US PhD programmes require candidates to pass what are known as comprehensive examinations, covering the entire historiography of several distinct fields before progressing to dissertation research. They can be an intense experience, but provide an excellent grounding for future teaching and research.

What would your advice be to anyone from overseas going to study history in the US?
As an undergraduate, be prepared to study a wide variety of fields beyond history. Figure out how they might change the way you think about history. As a graduate student, be prepared to do some teaching while working towards your degree. It will likely be required.

Matthew Lockwood is assistant professor of history at the University of Alabama

“In France, university strikes were seen as a formative part of your education in political engagement”

Olivette Otele

What was life like as a history student in France?
It was fun but competitive. While that was intimidating initially, it was also very good for building up resilience and emotional strength. You learnt to work independently very quickly. In terms of feedback, you got the teachers' notes scribbled on the side of your essays, but that was it. There were no tutorials or in-depth discussions of your work.

What was the most interesting topic you studied?
Oh, that's so hard! I studied both history and literature and loved them equally. In history, I enjoyed being able to study a wide range of topics from the Middle Ages to maritime history. Colonial and global history fascinated me, and I also loved women's history.

Are there any aspects of studying in France that might surprise readers in the UK?
Yes, lots. The first one being the fees: nowadays it costs around €200 a year for a BA, and €400 for a PhD. And it was even cheaper in my day! That really is a world away from studying in Britain. Most students also stay close to home – they usually choose a university in the city they grew up in.

What would your advice be to anyone from overseas going to study history in France?
One thing you will inevitably encounter are the annual student and staff strikes. At times, that can feel like you're wasting your time. But in France, it's seen as a formative part of your education in political engagement and social consciousness. But also bear in mind that, even during strikes, you're still expected to perform in your exams. This means you have to have been working off your own back – again, the emphasis is always on being able to work independently.

But most of all, I would say: try and soak up as much learning as you possibly can.

Olivette Otele is professor of the history of slavery at the University of Bristol

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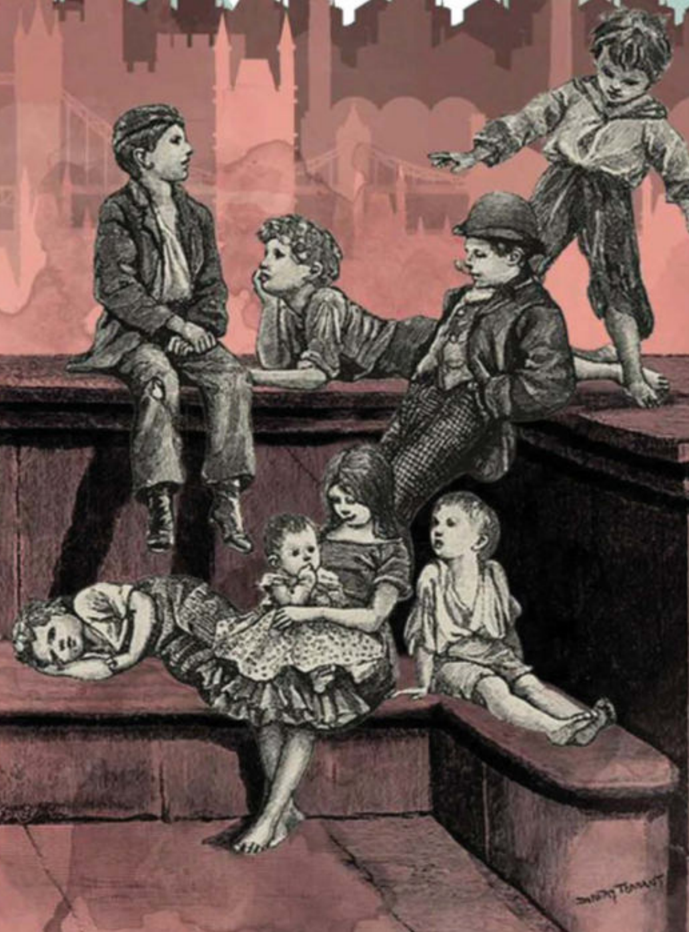
WHAT THE DICKENS?

A fascinating and free exhibition explores what childhood was really like in Dickensian London



With his epic stories, larger-than-life characters and vivid depictions of everyday life in Victorian times, Charles Dickens earned his place in literary history. In many ways, his work was ahead of its time, shining a light on the plight of the era's impoverished children and helping to create a better childhood for us all. And though it may seem like his presence has never left us, 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of his death.

To celebrate Dickens' work and the role he played in society, Senate House Library is running a very special free exhibition, *Childhood in Dickensian London*. Running from 20 January 2020 to 20 June 2020, the exhibition will take you on a fascinating journey through Victorian London from the 1830s, right until the turn of the 20th century.

FROM RAGS TO RICHES

Much of the exhibition portrays childhood as Dickens would have experienced it himself. His good fortune at being sent to school at the age of nine and his dreams of becoming a 'gentleman', were short-lived when his father was imprisoned for bad debt. His family were thrown into Marshalsea, a notorious prison on the banks of the Thames, while Charles was sent to endure the grim conditions at Warren's boot polish factory. Happily, he was returned to school three years later, but his experiences illuminate many of his classic novels.

Childhood in Dickensian London is a fascinating walk through history that's sure to be a hit with visitors young and old alike. Incredibly, it's also free, so start planning your visit today.

Explore Senate House Library

Many of the items on display in the *Childhood in Dickensian London* exhibition are part of the rich and extensive collection held at Senate House Library, London, including more than 2 million books, 50 unique Special Collections and more than 1,600 archives. It's one of the UK's largest academic libraries for the arts, humanities and social sciences, and all the more exciting for being set in a stunning Grade II-Listed Art Deco building in the heart of Bloomsbury.

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>
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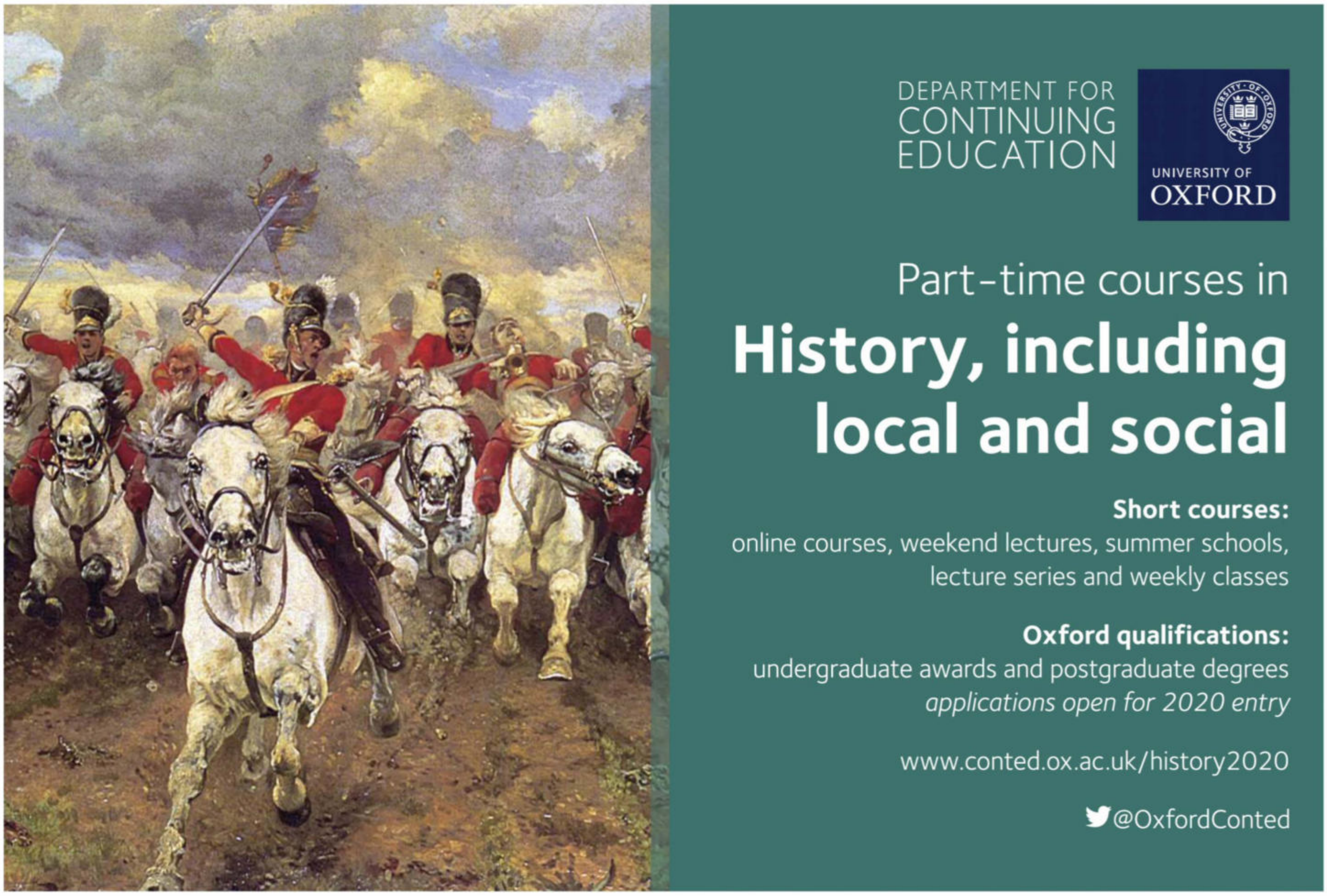

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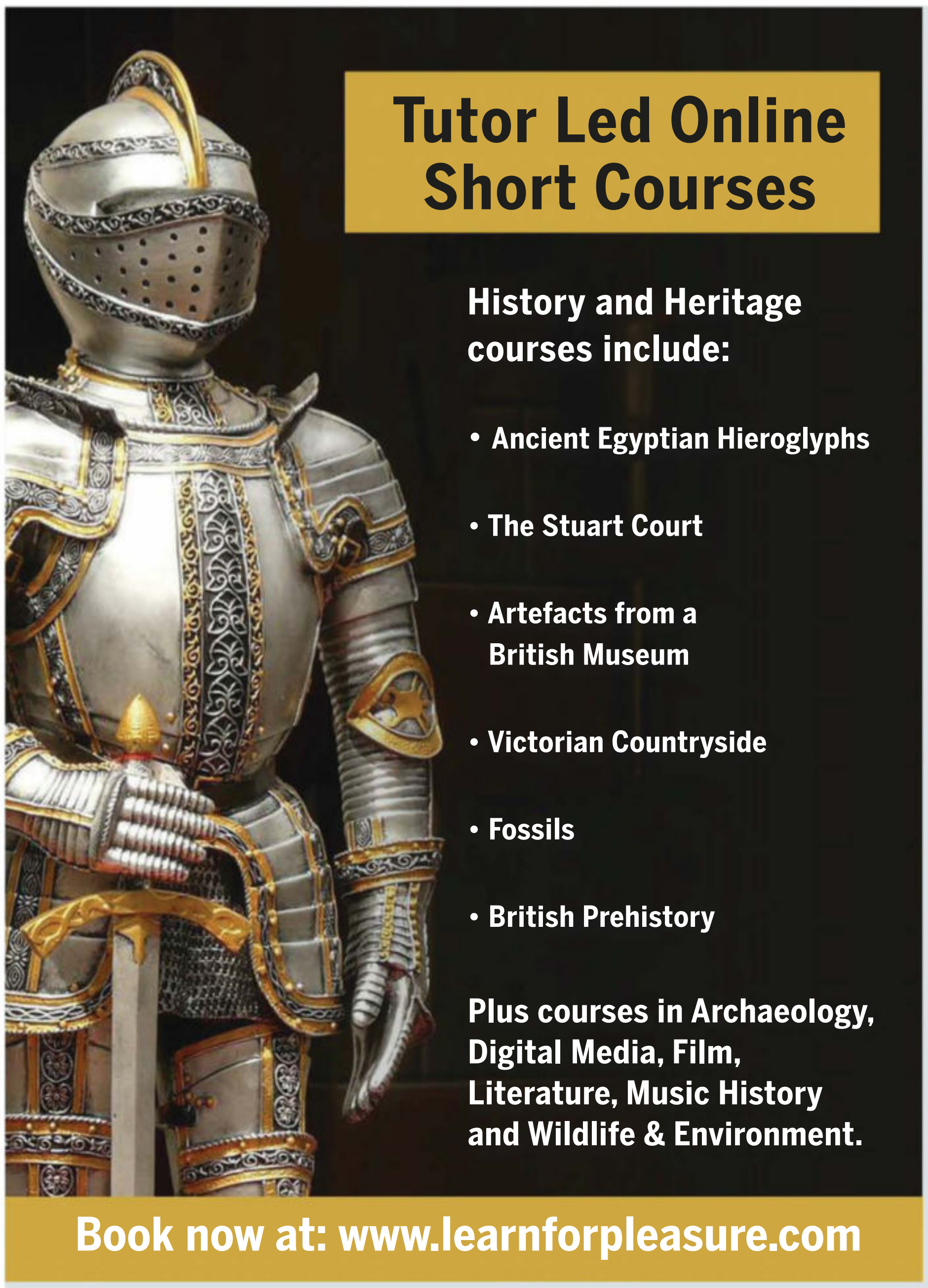

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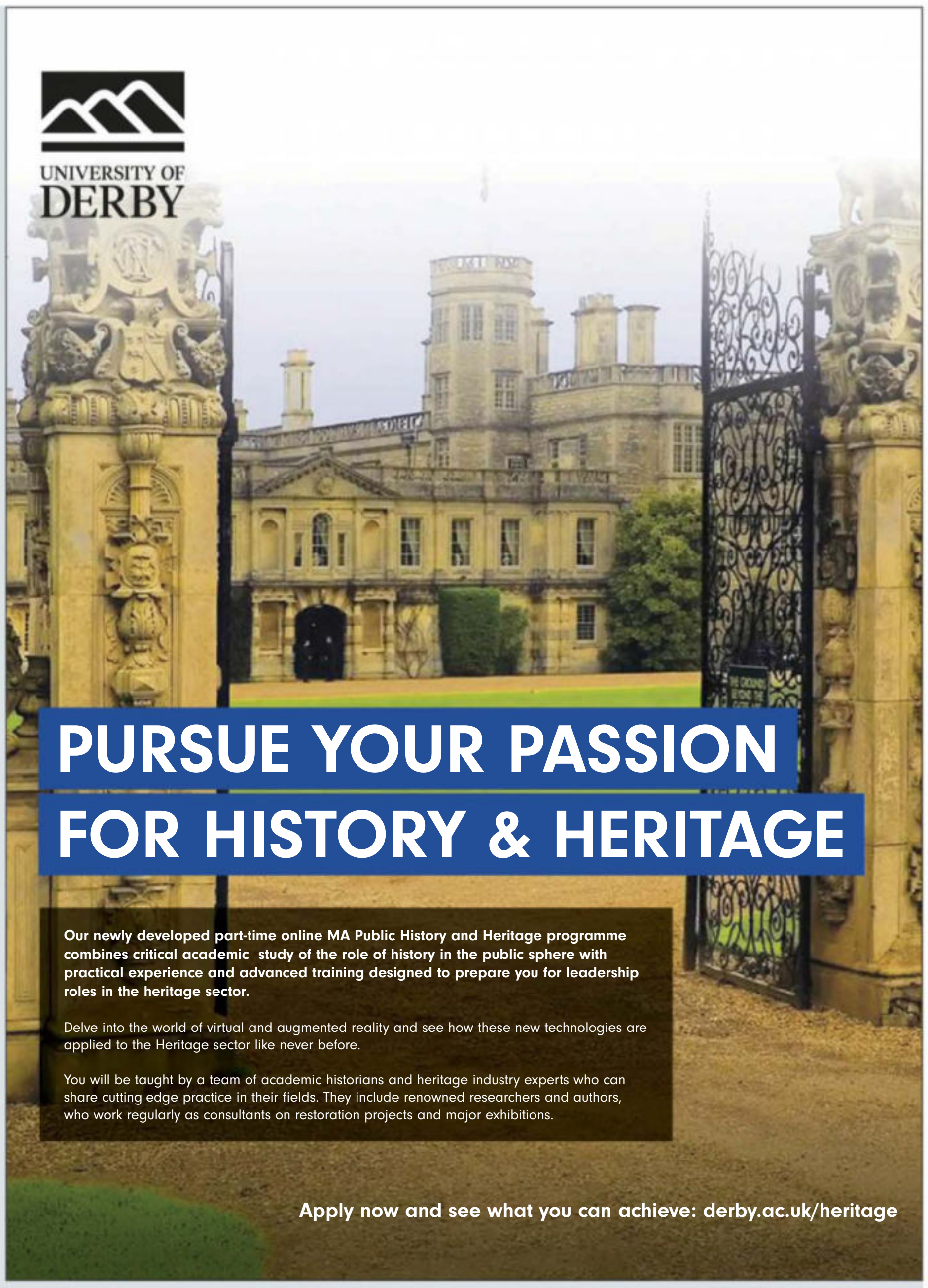

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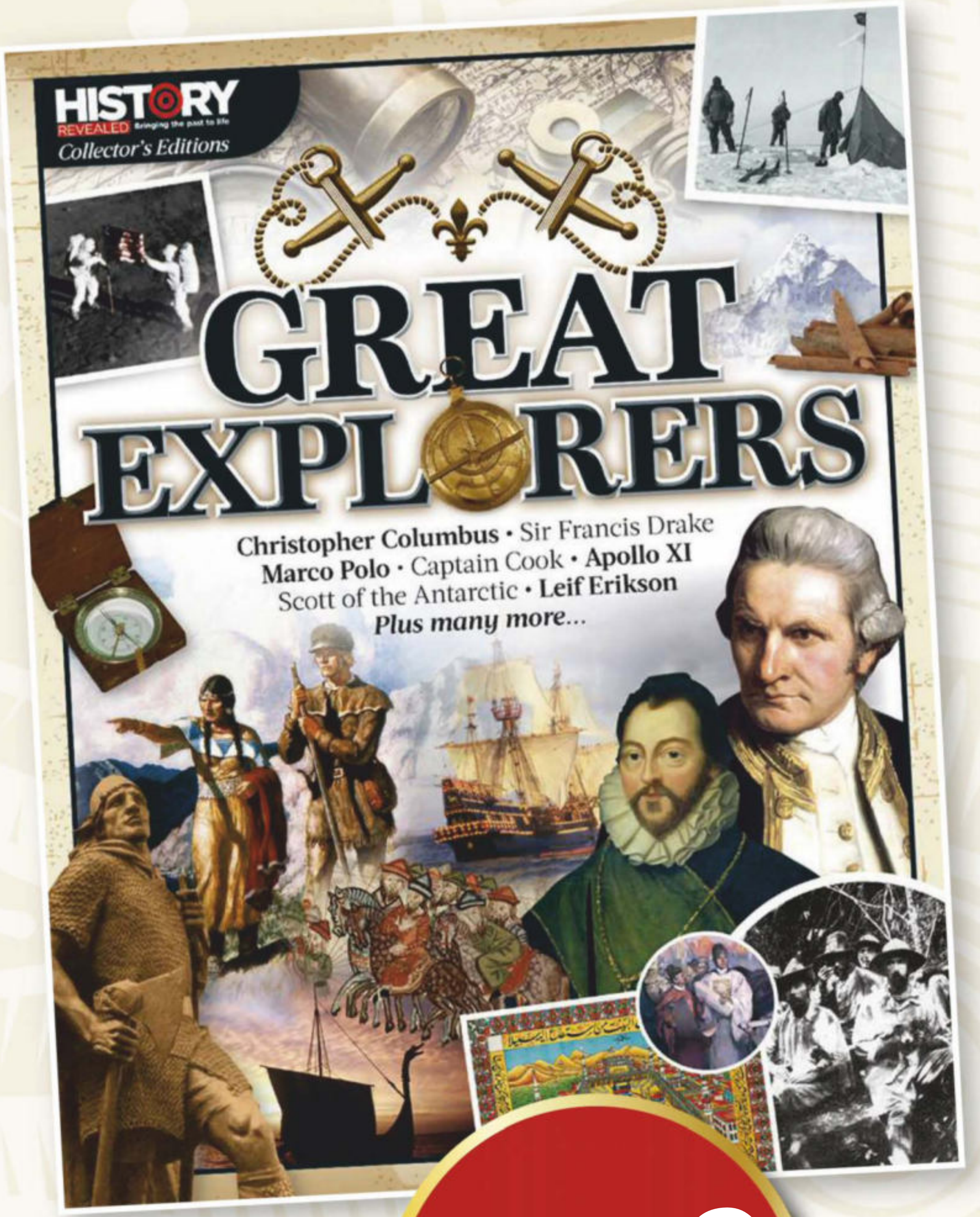
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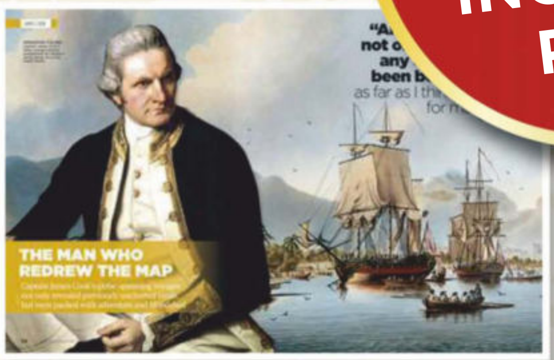
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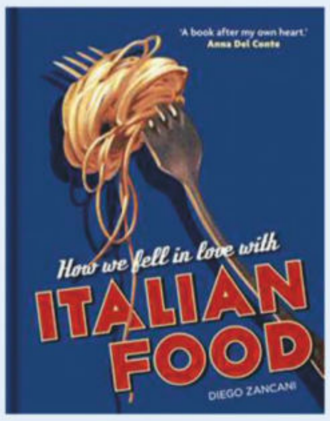
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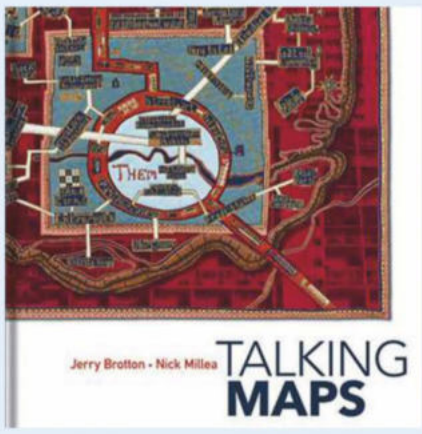
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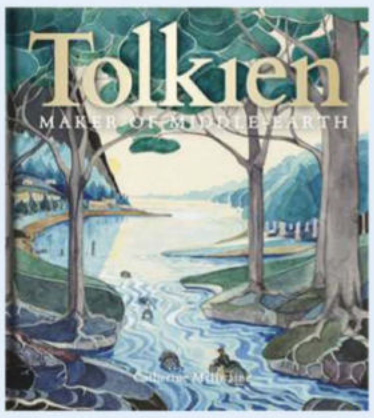
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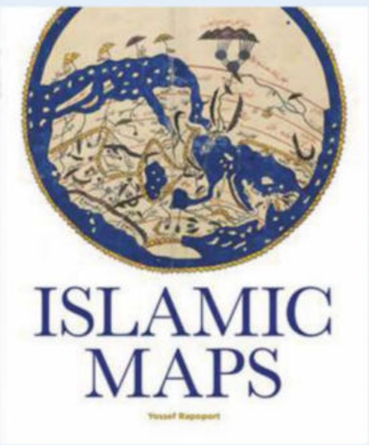
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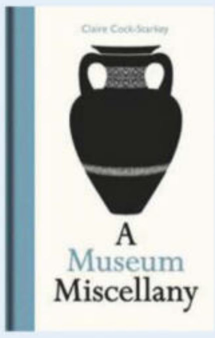
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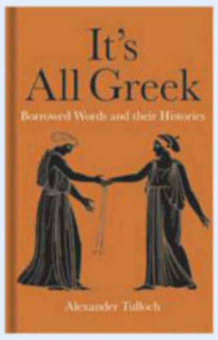
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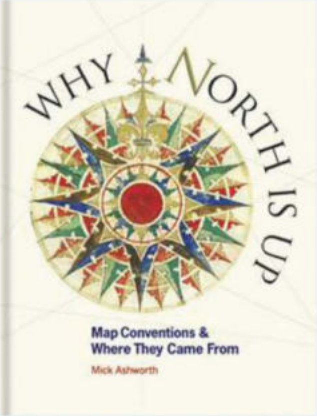
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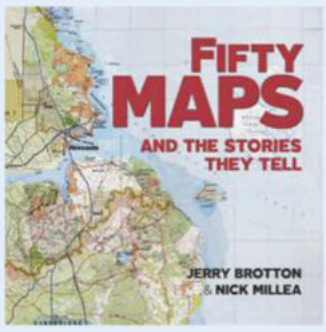
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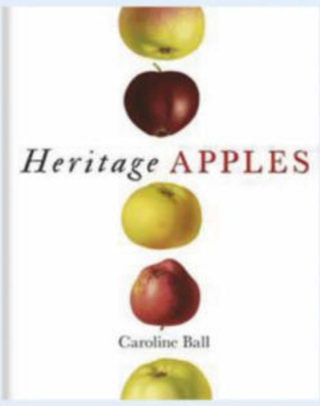
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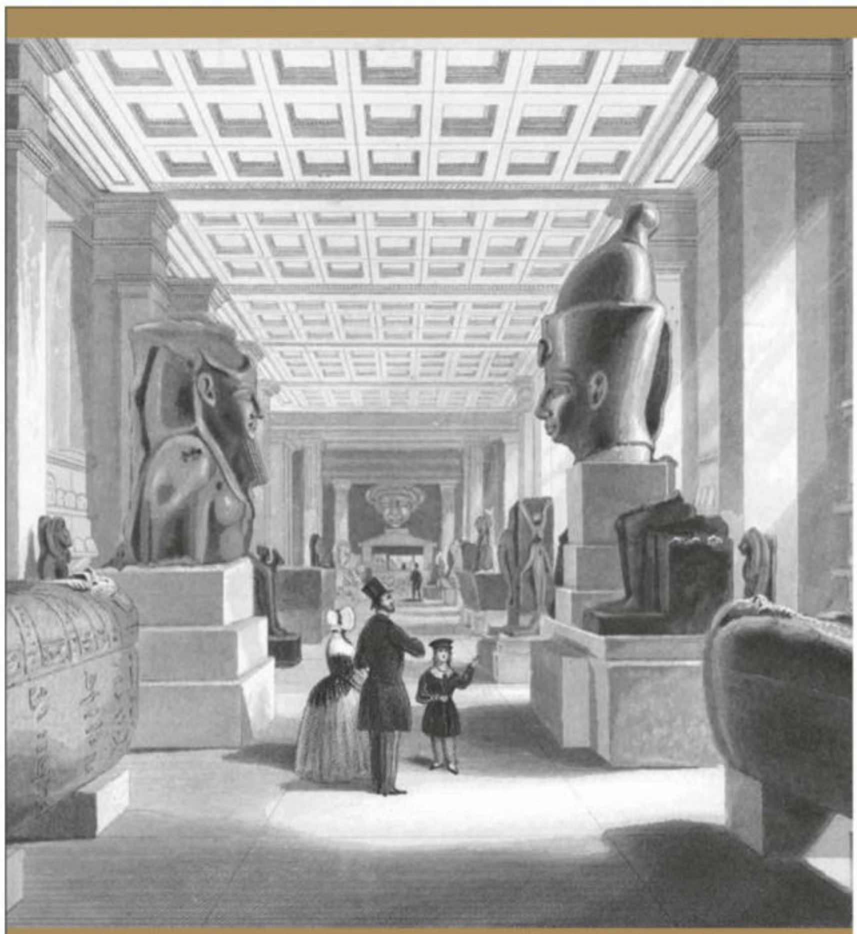

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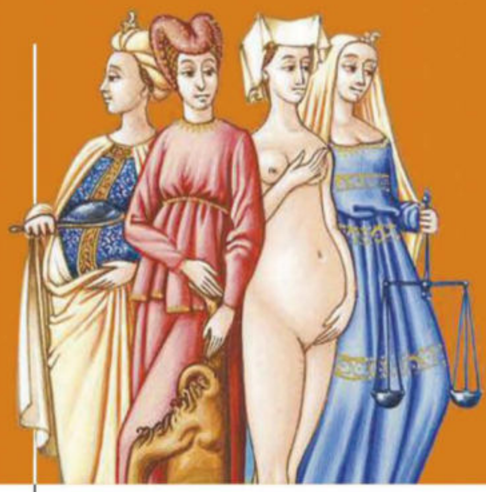

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Joanna Bourke on Susan P Mattern's *The Slow Moon Climbs* › page 80

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"The western empire collapsed mainly because the Romans failed to learn lessons from the past"

Peter Jones reviews Michael Kulikowski's *Imperial Tragedy* › page 78

BRIDGEMAN

"The 'rabbit-breeder' hoax could be read as an eloquent political protest"

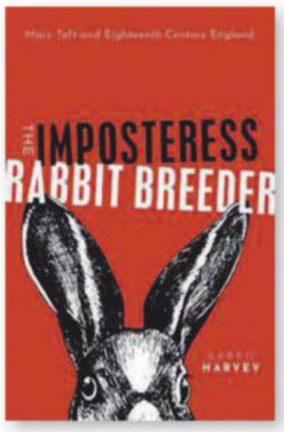
KAREN HARVEY speaks to Ellie Cawthorne about her new book, which examines what a bizarre rabbit-based deception reveals about politics and prurience in 18th-century society

Ellie Cawthorne: In 1726, a woman named Mary Toft perpetrated an extraordinary hoax that lasted several weeks and captured the imagination of the British public. What did it involve?

Karen Harvey: Essentially, Mary Toft claimed to have given birth to rabbits – an extraordinary claim that was supported by several people for several weeks. It turns out, of course, that it didn't quite happen as described because, spoiler alert, women can't gestate rabbits.

The trigger for the whole hoax was an incident that occurred when Toft, a poor agricultural day-labourer, was working in a field near Godalming in Surrey. She spotted a couple of rabbits and decided to chase one. Although she failed to catch it, the idea of that rabbit wouldn't leave her head. Toft was pregnant at the time and a short while afterwards, she reported undergoing what was clearly a miscarriage. This went on for some weeks, and when it was concluded, she experienced a seemingly 'monstrous birth' in which she began to pass strange animal parts. Various doctors examined Toft, and then transported her to London for further study. She stayed there for a few weeks, during which time she appeared to give birth to several sections of animal flesh.

The whole thing collapsed when a worker at the bagnio [a type of lodging house] where Toft was staying admitted he had been asked by her family to provide them with rabbits. Several witnesses then confessed that they'd had similar requests. It's clear that those animals were killed, skinned, dissected and then used in the hoax.



The Imposteress Rabbit Breeder: Mary Toft and Eighteenth-Century England
by Karen Harvey
(Oxford University Press, 224 pages, £16.99)

What interested you about the case?

Historians have previously studied the rabbit-breeder hoax from the perspective of the doctors, the public debate it triggered or the satire it produced. They haven't really asked why and how a woman like Mary Toft would become involved in this kind of event. I wanted to shine a light on the woman at the heart of the case. If you do that, I think you can start to unpick some of the social, political and cultural conditions of the early 18th century. Themes begin to emerge, such as social exclusion, unrest and political tension, and the position of women.

You argue that rabbits were an incendiary political symbol at the time – how so?

Yes, rabbits were highly controversial animals at this time. They had long been a symbol of the wealthy, and many were still the property of the elite, valuable for their fur and meat. They were also often a source of tension in communities, because landowners' rabbits would escape their warrens onto common land and eat the crops that the commoners might be harvesting or grazing their animals on. Rabbits really are a pest if you don't own them. But taking or killing them was tantamount to theft, and was harshly punished.

As such, a number of protests across England at this time revolved around rabbits – as well as fish, deer and other animals – as a symbol of elite privilege. They were seen to represent the power of landowners as opposed to the complete lack of rights of the agricultural or rural poor, and became a focus for the grievances of those excluded from established forms of power-holding.

As well as providing some interesting background to the case, this is important context for Mary Toft's family specifically. I discovered that her husband, Joshua, was actually involved in such a protest. Shortly before she hatched the hoax, Joshua took part in a mass trespass on a fish pond in Godalming with around 30 other men. I believe we can quite reasonably connect those two things. And I think contemporaries did.

Mary Toft described chasing the rabbit because she couldn't afford to buy one, which suggests to me that she may well have been conscious of the political punch the hoax was going to have. In this society, a poor individual, particularly a woman, didn't have many resources at their disposal to engage in politics and in public debate. One reading of the 'rabbit-breeder' hoax is that it was actually a very eloquent political protest on the part of an otherwise powerless poor woman, and I think there is evidence for that case.

Several notable doctors examined Toft. Why were they taken in by her story for so long?

The doctors involved in this case weren't quacks. They were highly regarded and highly qualified: very reputable medical men, some of whom even had a direct link to the royal household. But the fact that they took Toft's claims seriously for so long doesn't mean they were ignorant. Instead, it's a demonstration of the Enlightenment in progress. These doctors were invested in cutting-edge scientific method and open-minded debate, which meant that they didn't want to discount anything until they could prove beyond doubt that it was a hoax. So they underwent a series of scientific steps, conducting experiments on the various animal parts Toft expelled. It was only once a mass of evidence had been brought together and a consensus had been reached that they felt able to dismiss it as a hoax.

It's important to remember that the idea of monstrous births was still a live debate at the time. Many respected intellectuals believed in the theory of the maternal imagination: the idea that

PROFILE

Karen Harvey is professor of cultural history at the University of Birmingham. She has published widely on gender and the body in 18th-century Britain, and is director of Birmingham Eighteenth Century Centre

PHOTOGRAPH BY
DARREN O'BRIEN

a pregnant woman's emotional responses to something she saw or felt could imprint physically onto her unborn child. For example, a woman might think of a peach and her child would be born with a reddened birthmark. That's quite different from saying that chasing a rabbit could turn a woman's foetus into a bunny, but it's on the same continuum.

What motivated Toft to undertake the fraud?
Now there's an interesting conundrum. An easy answer might be that she did it for money. But the problem with that explanation is that no money appears to have ever changed hands. If the ambition of Toft and those around her was to get rich, then the scheme was a complete failure. I think if they were solely after money, they'd have set the whole thing up differently – large groups of people visited Toft both in Guildford and London, and her family could have charged for the privilege.

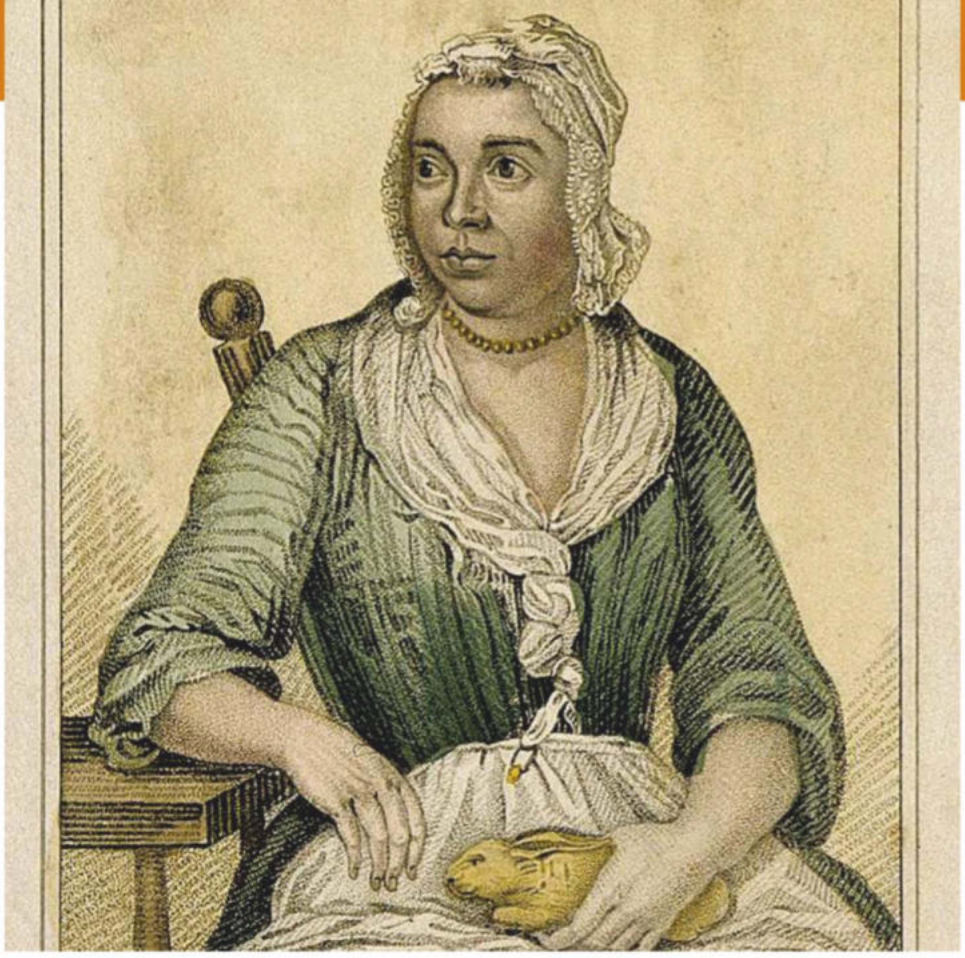
So we have to look elsewhere for an explanation. The closest thing we get to an insider's account of the hoax are three statements Toft gave to a doctor called James Douglas. From these sources, I make the case that she was persuaded, perhaps even forced, to go through with this difficult series of fake births by the women around her. Pregnancy and childbirth were still very female-dominated processes at the time, and Mary was surrounded throughout by older and more authoritative women – most notably her mother-in-law. She was clearly intimidated by them, and in her final statement, when she was asked who had put her up to it, Mary's answer was unequivocal: her mother-in-law.

Mary was a young wife and mother living with her husband's family, and had suffered an awful miscarriage as the hoax started to develop. She had failed in her reproductive duty, and I think that might have been at the heart of this affair for the women around her. I think that this tells us something about women's reproductive roles and the ways female-dominated social spheres operated at the time.

So Toft didn't have much control over how the hoax went?
Even though she was at the centre of this maelstrom, my take is that she had barely any agency over what was happening to her and her body. Just think about the physical nature of the hoax. Without going into too much detail, Toft had animal parts inserted into her body and those parts were forced out in a process that went on for several weeks. It was a painful, uncomfortable and very risky affair. I find it hard to believe that a woman would do that willingly, all by herself. The evidence suggests that she was frightened and felt pressured at every turn. Once you start to read the historical documents, you see that at the centre of this was a woman who was almost entirely powerless, which is incredibly sad.

What does the public clamour that surrounded Mary Toft tell us about 18th-century society?
I think it exposes an undercurrent of smutty, bawdy humour running beneath the polite gentility we often associate with the 18th century. The sensation around this seemingly miraculous event tells us that there was a tremendous hunger for the extraordinary. Even after Toft had been exposed as a fraud, people still went to see her imprisoned in the Westminster House of Correction.

> **"The hoax exposes an undercurrent of smutty, bawdy humour running beneath the polite gentility we often associate with the 18th century"**



Hunger for the extraordinary Mary Toft's 1726 hoax – in which she appeared to give birth to rabbits – led to attention from the press, much of it prurient

But there was definitely an unpleasant tenor to some of that interest. Mary became the focus of some unsavoury and rather nasty press, and there were incredibly prurient discussions around her body. The case was ripe for all kinds of innuendo – it provided great comedic ammunition for satirists, and the public lapped it up. This was partly down to blatant misogyny, but the fact that Toft was poor was also tremendously significant in the way she was treated by the press. When the hoax was exposed, they turned on her with vitriol. Where she had once been seen as a pitiable figure, now she was wicked. She was seen as a threat, both to the reputable doctors she made a mockery of, but also to the elites more generally – even to King George I himself. It was widely known that he'd had a real interest in the case, so its exposure posed a potential embarrassment for the monarchy.

Where did all of this leave Mary Toft? What happened to her after her deception was exposed?
When it all unravelled, public feeling against Toft turned vicious and she was imprisoned for imposture. She was eventually released without charge, and it's very difficult to trace what happened to her after that. When she left the House of Correction she was reported to have been considerably weakened by the whole experience. Within a year she went on to have another child, but then she seems to have fallen back into a certain amount of obscurity. Interestingly, though, there is a remarkable entry on the parish register recording her burial. On a page where everybody else is just referred to by their name, Toft is named as the "Imposteress Rabbit Breeder". This reputation clearly followed her, and even 40 years after the case there was an enduring memory of the hoax and her role in it.

If we look at early 18th-century Britain through the lens of the Mary Toft hoax, what kind of society is revealed?
The picture that I take away from this case is one of a society riven with inequality and social conflict. Part of that hinged on tensions between social ranks. But another set of inequities and hierarchies were also thrown into that already unequal world: gender.

In the rabbit-breeder hoax, we see all of these tensions played out between elite men (whether the doctors or those who represented the criminal justice system) and a poor woman. For me, it's those social tensions that are really at the heart of this extraordinary affair. H

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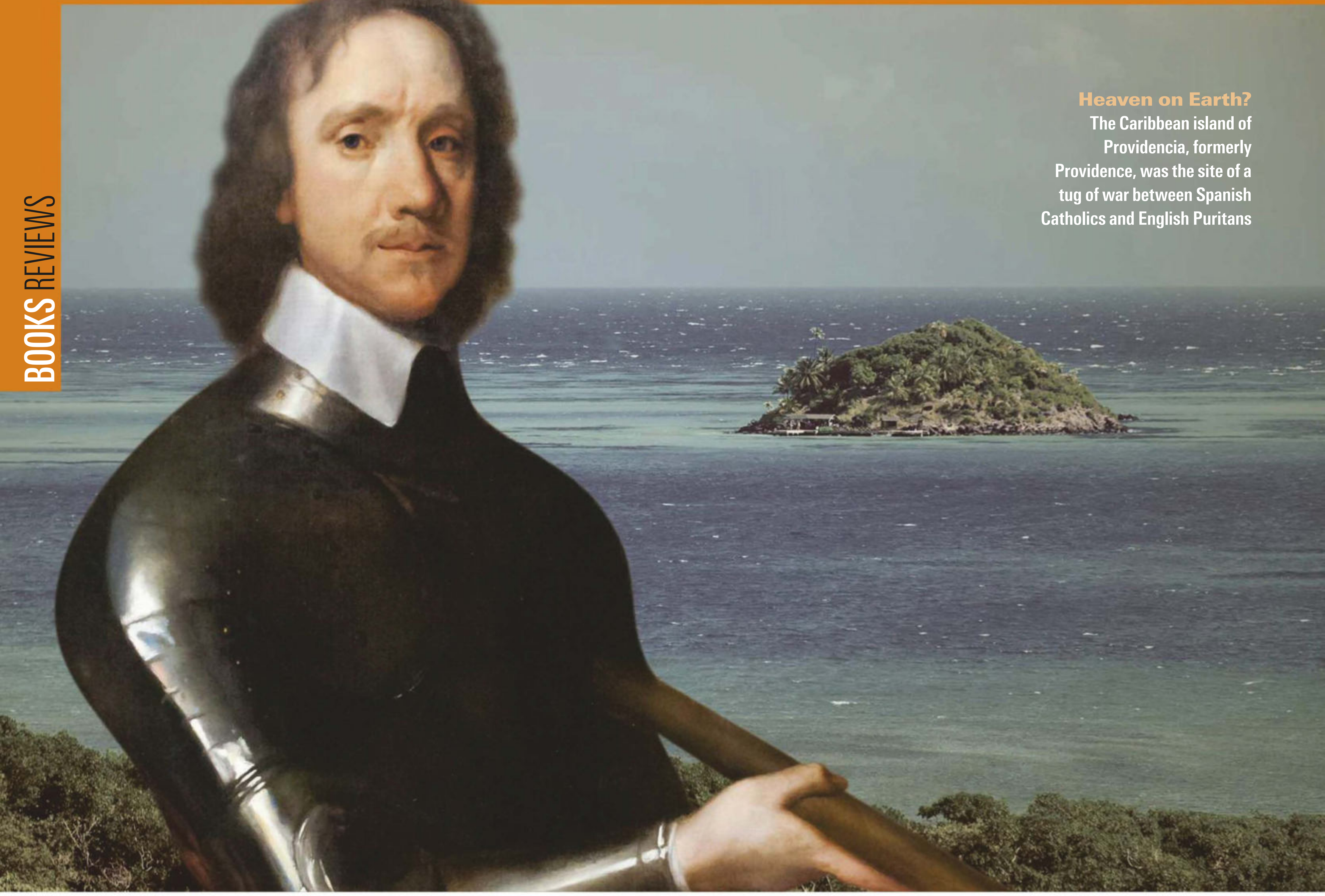


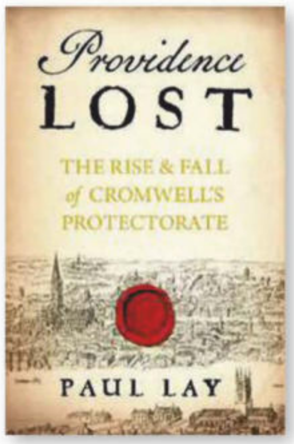
Heaven on Earth? The Caribbean island of Providencia, formerly Providence, was the site of a tug of war between Spanish Catholics and English Puritans

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

17TH CENTURY

With God on our side

MARK STOYLE applauds an absorbing account of the Puritans' furthest outpost in the Caribbean – and Cromwell's ill-starred campaign to snatch the Spanish New World



Providence Lost: The Rise and Fall of Cromwell's Protectorate
by Paul Lay
Head of Zeus, 352 pages, £30

Few would expect a history of the Cromwellian protectorate to begin on a small island off the coast of present-day Nicaragua. But that is precisely where Paul Lay, editor of *History Today* magazine, transports his readers in the opening pages of this absorbing and beautifully written book.

The island in question was Providence: a rocky but verdant outcrop, just a few miles square, which had been reached by a party of English folk in 1629. As Lay observes, this would be "the furthest outpost of English puritanism" for the next decade. 'Providence' was understood by English Protestants at this time to mean divine direction or guidance – and it was among the most zealous Protestants, or 'Puritans', that a tendency to see God's hand in almost everything that happened on Earth was especially marked. By choosing to re-christen the island – hitherto known to the Spanish (then the dominant power in the Caribbean) as 'Catalina' – the settlers were making a powerful statement about their own sense of mission and religious faith.

As Lay explains, King Charles I disliked the godly strain of Protestantism to which both the settlers and their powerful backers at home adhered. Nevertheless, like them, he could see the potential advantages of establishing an English foothold so close to the Spanish Main, from which the riches of the New World flowed yearly to Seville in the fabled treasure fleets. So in 1630, the king issued a formal patent for the establishment of a "Company of Adventurers… for the Plantation of the Island of

Providence" – better known to history as 'the Providence Island Company'.

Charles was to reap little reward from his grant. On the contrary, the wealthy Puritan investors in England who governed the company's affairs used their meetings as an opportunity to conspire against the king's own government. By 1641, Charles I and his leading critics in parliament – including John Pym, the treasurer of the company – were locked in a bitter struggle for political control.

Meanwhile back in the Caribbean, the Spaniards – resentful of the English interlopers – were preparing to pounce. In May they attacked the fledgling plantation, capturing the settlers and shipping them back to Europe. Providence was lost. As England itself slid into a catastrophic Civil War between king and parliament during the following year – a war that would eventually result in the defeat of the royalists, the execution of Charles I and the establishment of an English republic – it would have been easy to assume this thwarted attempt to set up an English outpost "in the heart of the Indies and the mouth of the Spaniards" would soon be entirely forgotten.

Easy, but wrong. For, as Lay goes on to show, once Oliver Cromwell had emerged as the leading figure in the parliamentarian camp and had crushed all resistance to godly Puritan rule (not only in England, but in Scotland and Ireland too), the man who had accepted the title of lord protector in 1653 found his thoughts turning towards wider conquests still. Astonishingly, at the time Cromwell reached that exalted position, he had never lost a battle: a record of continual triumph that, as Lay stresses, Cromwell ascribed to God's own providence. Now, he decided, God wished him to take the fight to His enemies abroad. And who could be a greater enemy to God, the gospel and all true-hearted Englishmen than Philip IV of Spain: champion of the Catholic faith and the man whose servants had humiliated the English in the Caribbean back in 1641?

Inspired partly by a desire for revenge, and partly by the memory of his Elizabethan forebears – but above all by the vision of destroying Spanish imperium by snatching away the New World territories that bankrolled Philip's armies – Cromwell now resolved on a great expedition to conquer the Spanish West Indies. Some 40 ships and 2,500 men were assembled to take part in this operation, which came to be known as 'the Western Design'. On Christmas Day 1654, the fleet set sail from Spithead. Unfortunately for Cromwell, the expedition proved an utter failure. An attack on the island of Hispaniola was beaten off with heavy losses: 1,500 men died as a result of wounds and disease, and the English had to be content with the capture of Jamaica, then seen as very much a consolation prize. Lay argues that Cromwell was crushed by the failure of the Western Design, believing that "after years of victory… God… had withdrawn his hand". In a pivotal sentence, he adds that Cromwell now decided that, since "divine providence had been lost… it must be regained".

This sets the tone for the second half of the book, in which Lay goes on to explore how Cromwell – convinced that his apparent desertion by God could only be explained through divine displeasure at his own failure to bring about a thoroughgoing moral reformation in England – attempted to achieve that elusive goal through the appointment of a group of godly major generals to rule over a cantonised kingdom. Yet the cultural battles against immorality and popular festivity on which the major generals promptly embarked were "wars unwinnable", Lay rightly insists. The new system that Cromwell had instituted was also deeply unpopular, affronting as it did the deep-rooted English distaste for all forms of military government.

> **"Cromwell was crushed by the failure of his New World mission, believing that 'after years of victory, God had withdrawn his hand'"**

Having sustained a humiliating defeat in the Caribbean, Cromwell now found himself locked in an impossible struggle against the forces of religious and cultural conservatism at home, and following the lord protector's death in 1658, the English republic rapidly fell apart. By this time, as Lay elegantly implies in his final chapter (aptly titled 'Full Circle'), it had become apparent to most contemporary observers that – like the faraway island that bore its name – divine providence, once lost, would not be so easily regained by godly English folk. **H**

Mark Stoyle is professor of early modern history at the University of Southampton, specialising in the 17th century and the Civil War

SUSAN PAPAZIAN/ DOMINIC MARTLEW/ JAMES HILL NYT MOSCOW

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

Clare Wright on the Australians who fought for women's suffrage

"In 1902, Australia became the first country in the world where some women won full political equality – that is, the right to vote and stand for parliament. But my book, *You Daughters of Freedom*, is also about what Australian women did next. After they won those rights, they came to the aid of those they called 'their less fortunate British sisters'."

Colin Grant on the experiences of the Windrush generation

"The migrants on the *Windrush* had a real sense that they were British. There were no Jamaican or Trinidadian passports in the 1940s – they held British passports. Many were patriotic Anglophiles, so the notion of coming to Britain was very exciting. They believed that they were making history and would be rewarded for undertaking this adventure."

Charles Emmerson on the upheavals of 1917 to 1924

"My new book starts in Petrograd in 1917. By the end of that year, Tsar Nicholas had been overthrown, the Russian empire was on the point of collapse and Europe was in tumult. Through the course of the years from 1917 to 1924, there was an almost constant series of revolutions, civil wars and cultural, social and economic upheavals. This is a really critical period of modern history."

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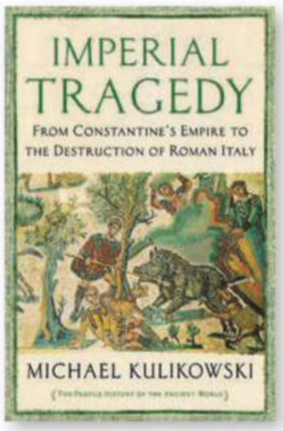
ANCIENT ROME

The empire slides back

PETER JONES salutes a persuasive account of how warlord rebellions and catastrophic mismanagement left Rome's once-impregnable rule vulnerable to collapse



Imperial Tragedy: From Constantine's Empire to the Destruction of Roman Italy, AD 363–568
by Michael Kulikowski
Profile, 420 pages, £25

At the end of his 2016 book *Imperial Triumph*, Michael Kulikowski highlighted that different ethnic groups – classified as 'barbarians' – had been settling within the Roman empire since the first century AD. As the Vindolanda tablets record, many of them forged good careers in the Roman army. He argued that the period from AD 235 brought a wider Eurasian dimension to Roman politics: over the next 50 years, 26 generals – more like warlords, with little political experience, many from the Balkans – fought it out to become emperor. 'Empires' in Palmyra and Gaul broke briefly from Rome; a Roman emperor was killed by the Persian Sasanian regime; various Germanic tribes were repulsed. Though Aurelian sorted out the military problems and Diocletian's reforms stabilised the situation, the result was an empire whose elites did not necessarily have close connections with the imperial centre in Rome.

In *Imperial Tragedy*, Kulikowski picks up the story where he left off, arguing that the western empire collapsed mainly because the Romans had not fully learned the lessons from this period.

Take Firmus in the province of Africa. He was the son of Nubel, a Roman grandee and king of the local Mauri tribe. After the corrupt Roman commander Romanus refused to respond to Firmus's pleas for financial reforms, in AD 371 Firmus led a revolt, aided by both the Mauri and two of Romanus's own regiments. The rebellion was put down and the finances reformed (as Firmus had suggested). This episode typified Roman managerial incompetence.

Likewise, as Kulikowski argues, there was the far more serious Gothic 'invasion' via the Balkans in AD 376, which signalled the beginning of the end. The Roman general Valens welcomed in the first tribe, as Romans were always keen to swell the ranks of their armies in troubled times – especially against the rising Sasanian threat.But after word spread that he wanted more to sign up, and other Gothic tribes petitioned for settlement, Valens refused, simply to show who was boss.

Further bad management of the situation resulted in the tribes uniting into a serious army and conducting an open revolt. At the battle of Adrianople in AD 378, the Roman army was crushed, Valens was killed and the empire in the Balkans was left in chaos. And so it went on: famous later warlords such as the Goth Alaric and the Hun Attila, though no saints, were open to an invitation to become part of an empire of around 50 million inhabitants, and with plenty of space for everyone – but no such offer was forthcoming. As a result of these and other revolts, none actually designed to overthrow the political system, Roman provinces almost by default turned into local kingdoms, and by c476 AD the western empire was at an end.

> **"The Goth Alaric and the Hun Attila were open to an invitation to join an empire that had plenty of space for everyone – but no offer was forthcoming"**

Kulikowski makes a very persuasive case. But readers should be aware that the book's detail, range and complexity – it inevitably covers the rise of Christianity, the eastern empire and Justinian's failed efforts to restore the western empire – make it a challenging read.

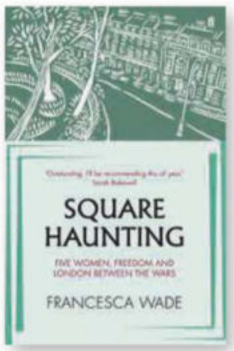
Peter Jones' latest book is *Vox Populi: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the Classical World but Were Afraid to Ask* (Atlantic, 2019)

DREAMSTIME

War and peace Romans and Goths interact on the Ludovisi Battle sarcophagus from the third century. A refusal to negotiate with tribes was a key factor in the empire's demise, according to Michael Kulikowski's book

20TH CENTURY

Neighbourhood watch



Square Haunting: Five Women, Freedom and London Between the Wars
by Francesca Wade
Faber & Faber, 432 pages, £20

Virginia Woolf first looked at flats in Mecklenburgh Square in 1915 but, horrified by a room "disfigured horribly with velvet curtains, gigantic purple cushions and the usual swarm of gilt & lemon coloured objects", retreated to Days Library. Shortly after she did eventually move to the square in 1939, a bomb ensured "all our windows are broken, ceilings down".

Woolf is one of five female Mecklenburgh Square residents vividly evoked in this book. Francesca Wade deftly interweaves the biographies of Woolf, modernist poet Hilda Doolittle (known by the pen name HD), detective novelist Dorothy L Sayers, classicist Jane Ellen Harrison and economic historian Eileen Power.

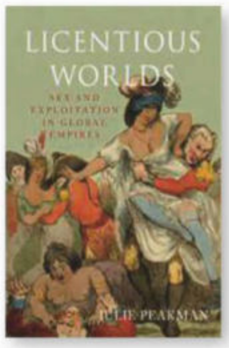
In number 44, HD heard her husband, Richard Aldington, with his mistress in the bedroom above. While living in HD's old room in 1920, Sayers created Lord Peter Wimsey. Before Mecklenburgh, Sayers had never touched a frying pan but, like the other women in the square, felt "the superiority of the trained mind" could cope with all domestic issues. At number 11, Harrison – Woolf's teacher and friend – was free to live with Hope Mirrlees (both published by the Woolfs' Hogarth Press) while exploring Russian literature. Later, Eileen Power created a socialist salon at number 44, while transforming school histories and BBC factual broadcasting. In her year at number 37, Woolf wrote a biography of Roger Fry, the novel *Between the Acts* and the essay *A Sketch of the Past,* and researched a democratic cultural history much like Power's.

Square Haunting is feminist in the best sense, viewing women's public careers through the windows of their private homes, but never privileging either. With studio flats in the square now costing over £2,000 per month, I want to time-travel to the extraordinary era Wade evokes in what is set to be one of the most fascinating non-fiction books of the year.

Maggie Humm, emeritus professor of cultural studies at the University of East London

EMPIRE

Body politic



Licentious Worlds: Sex and Exploitation in Global Empires
by Julie Peakman
Reaktion Books, 368 pages, £25

In this ambitious study, Julie Peakman examines how sex, gender and empire interacted in imperial contact zones that range from the first 'New World' of the Americas to Polynesia and Oceania, Africa, post-colonial America and the Caribbean, India, the Ottoman empire, China and Japan.

Peakman has an ear for a good story and makes engaging use of a range of historical sources, from European travellers' journals, missionary accounts and travelogues, to sex handbooks, anthropological studies and more. Into her fluent and compelling narrative, she blends issues of historical interpretation – about the use of sexual violence to subdue whole peoples, for example, or the impact of western men's laced-up Christian cultures of origin on their interpretations of 'native' women. She makes clear the difficulty of using evidence produced by white colonialists, and exposes gaps that mean we sometimes cannot know how the subjects experienced such encounters.

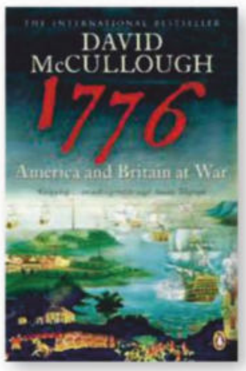
Women are shown to be the victims of imperial conquest but Peakman also gives them agency: taking white male lovers as protectors, for example, and becoming political players. She includes discussion of same-sex marriage and gender role-switching, and threaded through the book is the imperial obsession with control of the body and the imposition of new sexual norms and values.

Suitable both for students and the general reader, *Licentious Worlds* is strongest in the more content-driven chapters that make up its bulk, rather than in the frustratingly undeveloped historiographical chapters at the end of the book. Nevertheless, Peakman achieves her aim of building on more recent challenges to a history of empire as a male venture – "groups of men travelling over vast oceans to forge triumphs for the conquering forces" – showing instead the integral role in empire-building played by women, gender and sexuality.

Alison Twells, professor of social and cultural history at Sheffield Hallam University

THE CLASSIC BOOK

Andrew Roberts champions a superb account of a pivotal year in US history



1776: America and Britain at War
by David McCullough
(2005)

David McCullough is a two-times Pulitzer prize-winner and the bestselling biographer of John Adams and Harry Truman. In 2005 he wrote a groundbreaking book about the 17 months between King George III's declaration of war on his American subjects in October 1775 and the arrival in March 1777 of the news in Britain of George Washington's victory at the battle of Trenton.

McCullough's thesis is that, to win the War of Independence, all the Continental Army needed to do was to stay in existence, come what may, and that the primary reason it succeeded in doing so was down to the superb leadership skills of George Washington.

On 14 January 1776, Washington commanded an army of only around 9,000 men, up to half of whom were not fit for duty. He was desperately short of money, muskets, cannon and, above all, gunpowder. (At one point his troops were down to an average of nine rounds each.) Fortunately, British military intelligence was so scanty that no advantage was taken of this by their commander, Lord Howe.

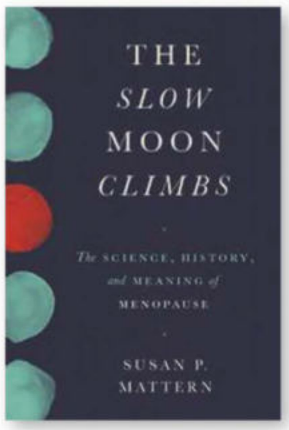
If Washington had known beforehand what problems he would face by accepting overall command, he wrote to a friend, he would have "taken my musket upon my shoulders and entered the ranks, or, if I could have justified the measure to posterity, and my own conscience, had retired to the back country, and lived in a wigwam". Fortunately for America, he didn't.

Andrew Roberts is a historian and author. He is currently writing a biography of George III

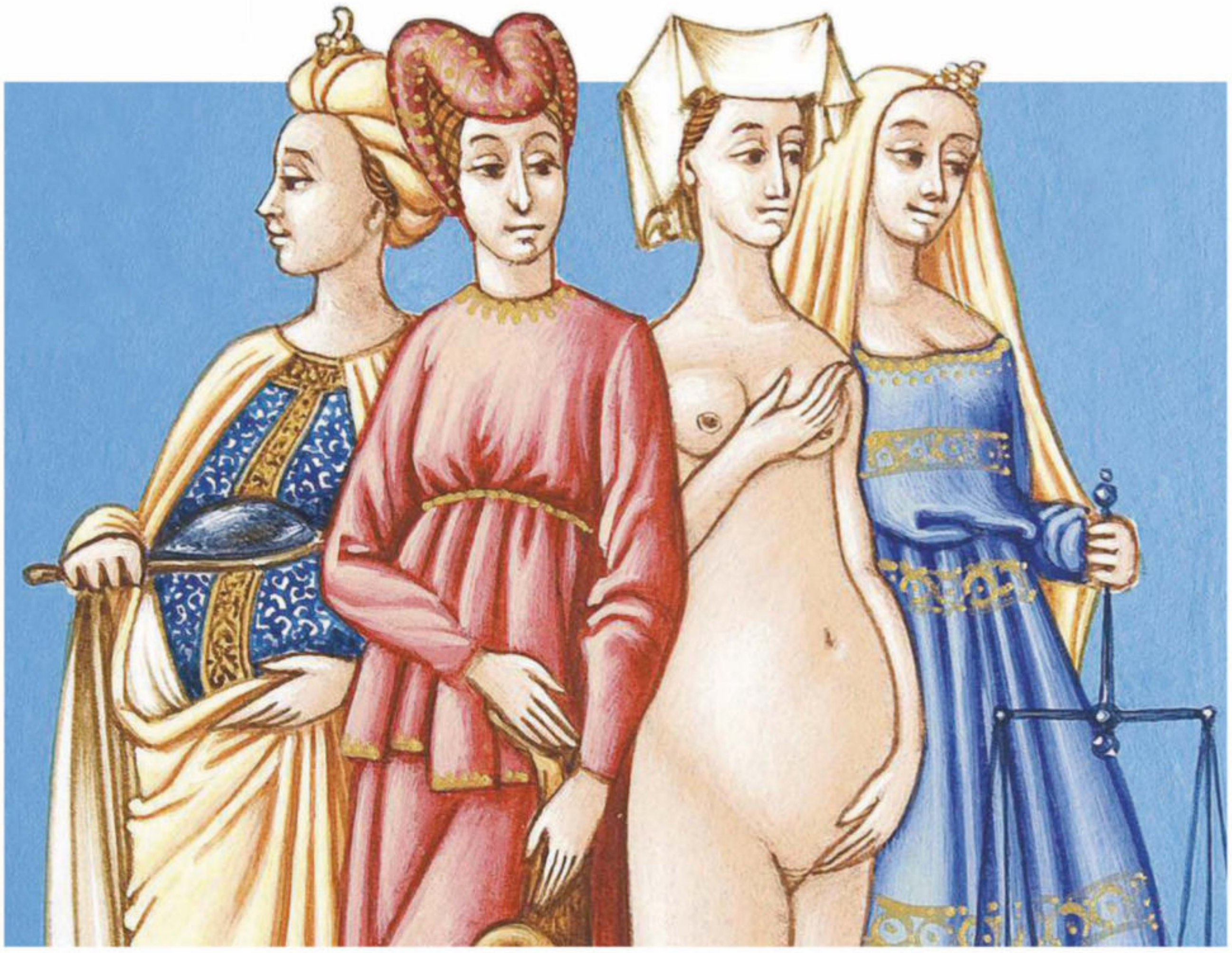
THE BODY

Forever changes

JOANNA BOURKE savours an encyclopedic study of the menopause, showing how it has grown in our understanding from 'partial death' to biologically essential adaptation



The Slow Moon Climbs: The Science, History and Meaning of Menopause
by Susan P Mattern
Princeton University Press,
480 pages, £25



Growing pains A tarot card illustration shows the ages of a woman. A new book by Susan P Mattern argues that the ways we understand the menopause are inextricably linked to cultural values and beliefs

> Not all societies had a notion of 'menopause' – previous concepts referred to 'green old age' or 'women's hell'

There comes a time in women's lives when, often unexpectedly, they start fanning themselves over their morning coffees, worrying about forgetting people's names, and, once the shock has worn off, calculating how much money they are saving through not having to buy what are euphemistically called 'sanitary products'.

The menopause is a predictable physiological process, but it is also fundamentally cultural. Unfortunately, even in fairly modern times, it has been pathologised. In *The Psychology of Women*, published in 1944, the Polish-American psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch argued that post-menopausal women who were happy were deviant and unfeminine. She likened the menopause to a "partial death"; it made women "deranged". In *Feminine Forever* (1966), Robert Wilson similarly described women who had been through the menopause as sexually neutered and unfeminine. According to him, oestrogen deficiency was analogous to castration. Of course, he had a stake in making these arguments. Wilson was an eminent Brooklyn gynaecologist and head of the Wilson Foundation, which was supported by millions of dollars in grants from the pharmaceutical industry. Among other products, his foundation produced hormone replacement therapy, the main 'treatment' for menopause symptoms.

It was therefore a relief to turn to Susan P Mattern's new book. She is celebratory. Mattern is a firm believer in evolutionary biology, arguing that there are good reasons why human women stop bearing children in midlife. She even contends that humanity itself was built on the labour of women who were no longer physically engaged in childbearing themselves. She provides evidence that the menopause is adaptive, in an evolutionary sense.

However, Mattern is equally clear that the way women experience the transition is cultural and rooted in specific beliefs, values and institutions, which in the modern period have been fundamentally influenced by the medical and pharmaceutical professions. Not all societies had a notion of what we today call 'menopause'. The word was invented in 1816 by Charles de Gardanne, a French writer who introduced the word 'ménespausie' in order to replace previous concepts such as 'green old age' or 'women's hell'. Traditional societies often acknowledged the ways in which women's roles changed in response to ageing or shifts in familial structures (such as the birth of grandchildren), but this is a wholly different phenomenon to the medicalised model that developed from the 18th century and dominates ideas and practices today.

The book is not without flaws. There are lengthy digressions that subject readers to intricate discussions of historical and demographic contexts. I found myself asking: does this have anything to do with the menopause? It does, of course. But it would have helped to be reminded more often.

This is a minor criticism, though. Mattern is an accomplished historian; she has an encyclopedic understanding of the history, meaning and physiological implications of the menopause. Although she wants to change the way it is discussed in our society, she retains a cold, scholarly eye. This is a book to be savoured, slowly and with care. H

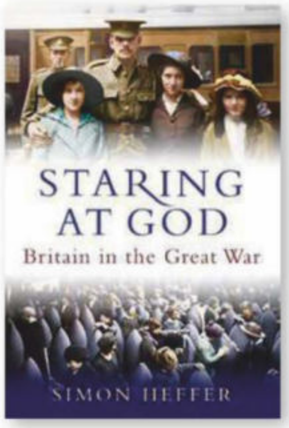
Joanna Bourke is professor of history at Birkbeck and author of *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkillers* (OUP, 2014)

BRIDGEMAN

FIRST WORLD WAR

Home fires burning

MAGGIE ANDREWS on an account of the First World War that's more concerned with politicking than ordinary people



Staring at God: Britain in the Great War
by Simon Heffer
Random House,
928 pages, £30

Interpretations of the past are always shaped by the politics and interests of their creators and the cultural moment of their production. Hence, this lengthy account of Britain's First World War by Simon Heffer focuses on political turmoil, intrigue and infighting. It provides detailed accounts of the personal failings and foibles, prejudices and politicking of men whose disingenuous infighting, manoeuvring or procrastination led to war and compromised the British war effort. Politicians who, Heffer argues, oversaw Britain's transition from 19th-century economic liberalism to a "highly indebted, highly taxed society in which government exerted unprecedented control over the lives of ordinary people".

Heffer may have written an important political history, but despite the masquerade of the cover images, not a social or cultural history of the era. His focus is on the governing classes. Smaller meal portions and meat-free days in public schools and gentlemen's clubs are our evidence for the 1917 food crisis; working-class housewives who struggled to feed their families and queued for six hours for a tub of margarine receive scant attention.

Heffer's detailed narratives of British political life stand in stark contrast to glib and sometimes inaccurate mentions of other areas of British society. For example, Britain's first Women's Institute was not, as is stated, set up in Charlton, West Sussex, in November 1915, but two months earlier in Llanfairpwll on Anglesey. The significant presence of Australian, Indian and Canadian troops in Britain is also missing from the story, despite the fact that it shaped concerns about venereal disease. Pressure from the Canadian government led to the draconian Regulation 40D, whereby women could be prosecuted for allegedly infecting men in the armed forces.

National Baby Week is dismissed as a "state-sponsored encouragement to procreate". Yet this campaign, chiefly led by volunteers, was an important attempt to improve infant health and welfare. The poor condition of recruits, due to childhood malnutrition, compromised wartime enlistment, and infant mortality rates were a national scandal: 20 per cent of children did not reach their fifth birthday. As the bishop of London pointed out in 1915, it was more dangerous to be a child in the capital's slums than a soldier on the western front.

These are not the only points where discussion and analysis take second place to the rhetorical flourish of polemical journalism; David Lloyd George's first year as prime minister is discussed in a chapter called 'Dictatorship'. Heffer never misses an opportunity to take a swipe at Lloyd George's administration and what he sees as the detrimental changes in the role and practice of government. In discussing housing, he argues: "ministers were now so used to the state controlling all areas of life that it had not occurred to them that private enterprise had a role to play in alleviating the housing crisis" – omitting to mention that the government was attempting to alleviate the horrors of unhealthy slums created by private enterprise. For those who share Heffer's views and interests, this is an eminently readable book. For others, it is more problematic.

> **"Smaller portions in public schools are used as evidence for the 1917 food crisis; mothers who queued for six hours for margarine receive scant attention"**

Maggie Andrews is emeritus professor of cultural history at the University of Worcester

NINA SUBIN

FROM FACT TO FICTION

Out of the shadows

Maaza Mengiste on her new novel set in war-torn 1930s Ethiopia, *The Shadow King*

Why is the Second Italo-Ethiopian War an interesting setting for a novel?
I grew up hearing stories of how a poorly equipped Ethiopian army took on a European powerhouse in a brutal war. I heard how men wearing traditional clothes charged at Italians who used tanks, poison gas and advanced artillery. It was a heady, inspiring myth. I wanted to write a story to honour those people, often poor and illiterate, who are swept aside for grander icons of history.

Were you inspired by any true stories?
I lived in Italy for about a year to research in the Fascist archives. What I realised is that the archives could provide some information, but I was looking at documents that had gone through censorship. Much of it was propaganda. I started talking to Italian friends, but nearly all responded: "My family doesn't talk about this." So I started looking for old photos, diaries and letters that soldiers had kept about Ethiopia. What emerged was another side of the war: personal, quotidian, uncensored. This is when the book started to come alive.

One day, well into my writing, I was in Ethiopia and my mother casually asked me why I wasn't thinking of my great-grandmother, Getey, who had also enlisted. I was utterly and completely surprised. I had never heard this story. This convinced me there are other histories still to be discovered from the Second Italo-Ethiopian war.

What role did women play in the war?
Traditionally, Ethiopian women followed behind the men in battle, collecting the dead, tending the wounded, singing songs to encourage and to threaten retreating soldiers. But some women also moved into the front lines. To imagine a woman in the front lines in 1935 is to be forced to adjust one's ideas of masculinity and femininity. We can go back through in history and we will find women as soldiers, as warriors. This is not a new story, but it has been silent for too long.

The Shadow King
by Maaza Mengiste
(Canongate, 448 pages, £16.99)

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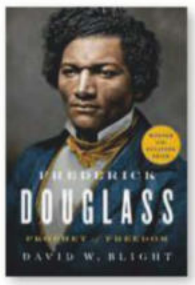
ALSO ON THE BOOKSHELF

WORDS BY **MATT ELTON** AND **ELLIE CAWTHORNE**

UNITED STATES

Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom
by David W Blight
(Simon & Schuster, 912 pages, £14.99)

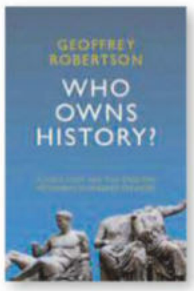


Breaking chains

A gifted orator and statesman who escaped slavery to become a national leader of the US abolitionist movement, Frederick Douglass became famous in the 19th century as a result of his speeches and writing. This Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, newly available in paperback, explores his professional successes, the challenges associated with his growing renown, and his complex personal life.

CULTURAL HISTORY

Who Owns History?
by Geoffrey Robertson
(Biteback, 320 pages, £20)

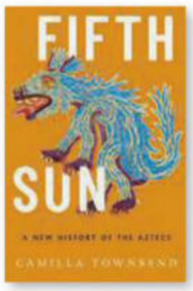


Object lessons

The issue of who should retain historical artefacts removed from their countries of origin by colonial powers remains hugely divisive. Human-rights barrister and broadcaster Geoffrey Robertson sets out the case for the return of objects such as the Elgin Marbles, ranging through history and delving into current issues such as Brexit and political populism. It's a robust, opinionated take on a complex debate.

AZTECS

Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs
by Camilla Townsend
(Oxford University Press,
320 pages, £19.99)

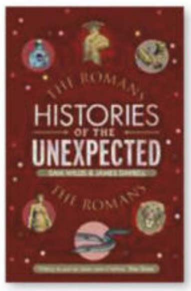


The not-so-bloody Aztecs?

Taking its name from a Mesoamerican foundation myth stating that the existing world was the fifth iteration of a cycle of creation and destruction, this scholarly but accessible study of Aztec society complicates the stereotype of it being merely bloody and barbaric. It also, refreshingly, draws extensively on written sources produced by Mexico's indigenous people, rather than the invading Europeans.

ANCIENT WORLD

Histories of the Unexpected: The Romans
by Sam Willis and James Daybell
(Atlantic, 208 pages, £8.99)



Whirlwind Romans

One of a series of books offering quirky windows into historical eras, this tour of the Roman world takes idiosyncratic starting points – walls, kissing, demonic possession – to explore how they're linked and what they can tell us about the period. Part of the fun is these themes' seeming obscurity, but each also has much to say about more familiar concepts of invasion, invention and imperial might.

SOCIAL HISTORY

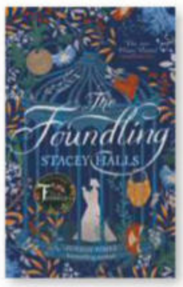
The House Party: A Short History of Leisure, Pleasure & the Country House Weekend
by Adrian Tinniswood
(Faber & Faber, 144 pages, £10)

Butlers and bedhopping

From princesses to 'pyjama romps', this slim volume revels in the glamour and debauchery of the British country house party – glittering affairs in which royals, politicians and celebrities assembled for a few days of excess. As well as sketching evocative episodes that unfolded at these gatherings, the book also explores how they reflected the wider social changes that were reverberating outside.

FICTION

The Foundling
by Stacey Halls
(Manilla Press,
400 pages, £12.99)

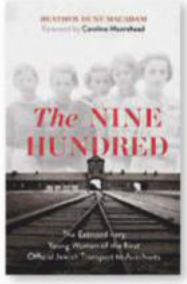


Maternal instincts

In Georgian London, Bess Bright turns up at the Foundling Hospital to claim the baby she left there six years earlier. When she is told that her daughter has already been picked up, Bess embarks on a mission to recover her child. This novel, from the author of last year's best-selling *The Familiars*, was inspired by a trip to the Foundling Museum and the collection of love tokens left there by desperate mothers.

WW2

The Nine Hundred: The Extraordinary Young Women of the First Official Jewish Transport to Auschwitz
by Heather Dune Macadam
(Hodder, 464 pages, £20)

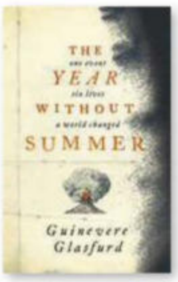


No turning back

When 999 young women boarded a train in Slovakia in March 1942, they believed they were heading off for three months of government service in a shoe factory. In reality, they were unwittingly boarding the first official Jewish transport to Auschwitz – the Slovak government had paid the Nazis to take them as slave labour. Macadam draws on interviews with survivors to reconstruct the women's stories.

FICTION

The Year Without Summer
by Guinevere Glasfurd
(Two Roads, 416 pages, £16.99)



The big freeze

In what became known as 'the year without a summer', 1816 saw the world plagued by freezing temperatures and heavy rain (see our feature on page 20). Triggered by the volcanic eruption of Mount Tambora, the extreme weather had many unexpected consequences. Glasfurd's novel traces six lives – including Mary Shelley and painter John Constable – in the aftermath of the climate catastrophe.

VISIT

Extravagant tastes

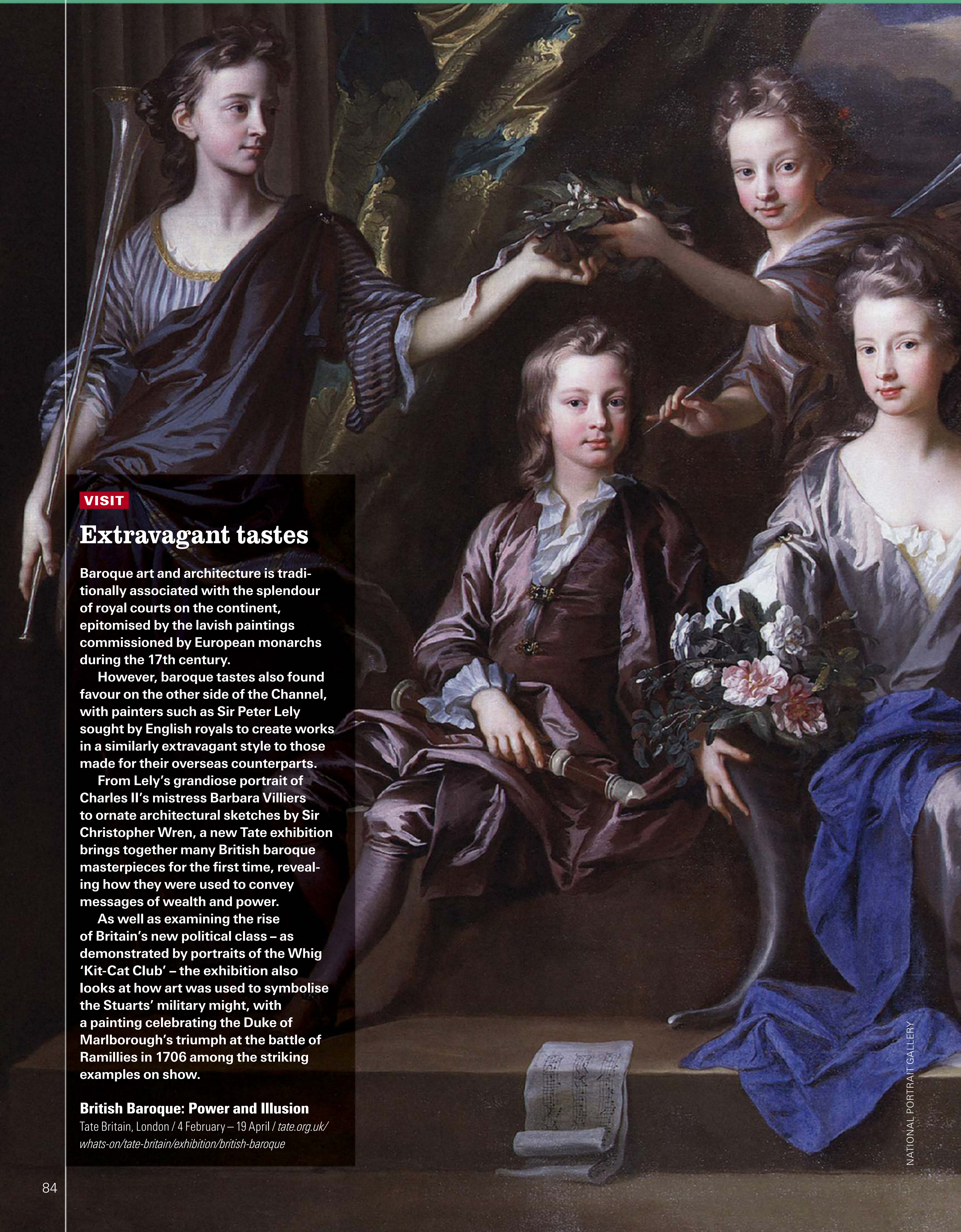
Baroque art and architecture is traditionally associated with the splendour of royal courts on the continent, epitomised by the lavish paintings commissioned by European monarchs during the 17th century.

However, baroque tastes also found favour on the other side of the Channel, with painters such as Sir Peter Lely sought by English royals to create works in a similarly extravagant style to those made for their overseas counterparts.

From Lely's grandiose portrait of Charles II's mistress Barbara Villiers to ornate architectural sketches by Sir Christopher Wren, a new Tate exhibition brings together many British baroque masterpieces for the first time, revealing how they were used to convey messages of wealth and power.

As well as examining the rise of Britain's new political class – as demonstrated by portraits of the Whig 'Kit-Cat Club' – the exhibition also looks at how art was used to symbolise the Stuarts' military might, with a painting celebrating the Duke of Marlborough's triumph at the battle of Ramillies in 1706 among the striking examples on show.

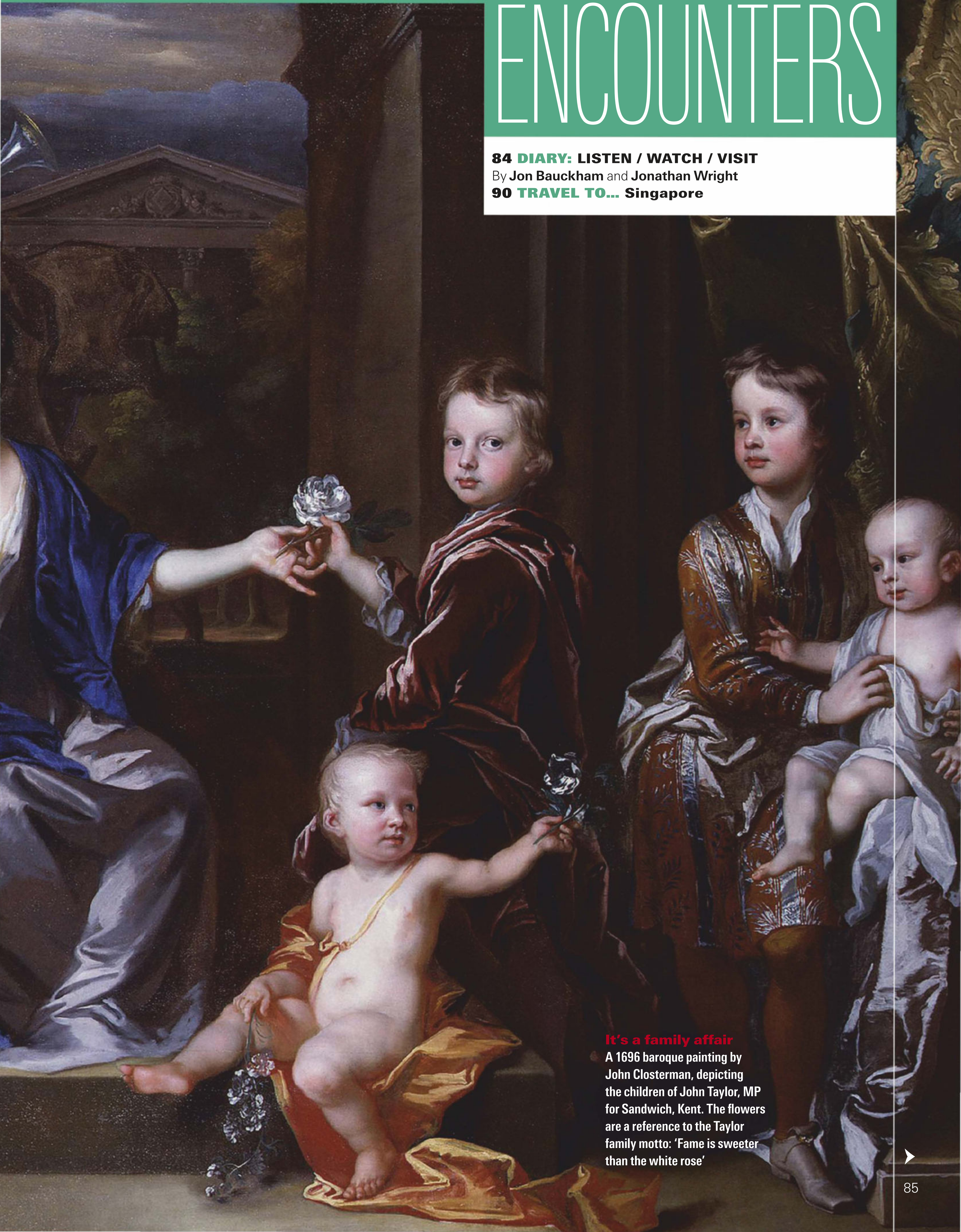
British Baroque: Power and Illusion
Tate Britain, London / 4 February – 19 April / *tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/british-baroque*



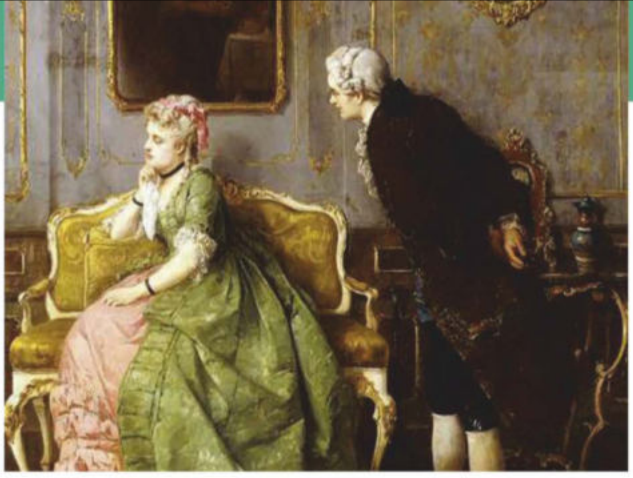
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

ENCOUNTERS

84 DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / VISIT
By **Jon Bauckham** and **Jonathan Wright**
90 TRAVEL TO... Singapore



It's a family affair
A 1696 baroque painting by John Closterman, depicting the children of John Taylor, MP for Sandwich, Kent. The flowers are a reference to the Taylor family motto: 'Fame is sweeter than the white rose'



An 1869 painting by Otto Erdmann entitled *The Apology*. Gender relations is the subject of a new BBC radio series

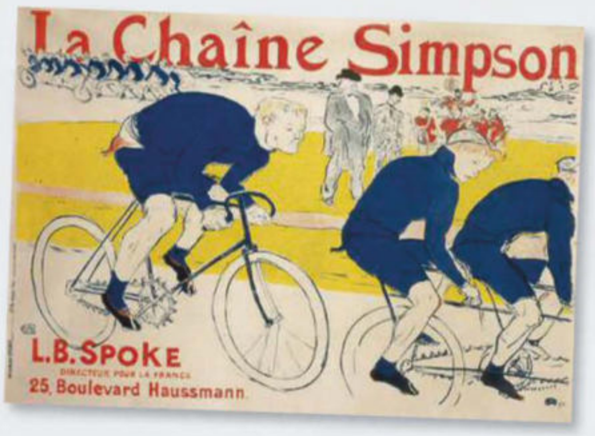
LISTEN

Gender discussions

In the era of #MeToo, many are pausing to look anew at everyday gender relations. But how about revisiting famous literary encounters between men and women? That's the central idea behind a 10-part radio series presented by playwright Laura Wade, which features readings from Adrian Lester and Lolita Chakrabarti.

The series begins with a meeting between Lancelot and Lady Phelot in *Le Morte D'Arthur*. It concludes by exploring Connell and Marianne's relationship in Sally Rooney's novel *Normal People*, and what it tells us about commitment.

Equal as We Are
BBC Radio 4 / Scheduled for 10 February



VISIT

Bohemian visions

Life in 19th-century Paris is the subject of a new exhibition at Bath's Victoria Art Gallery, showcasing colourful posters designed by famed Post-Impressionist painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901).

Advertising local businesses and nightclubs such as the Moulin Rouge, the posters will be presented in their original, full-size glory (some works stretching from floor to ceiling), revealing the artist's talents as a jobbing printmaker.

Toulouse-Lautrec and the Masters of Montmartre
Victoria Art Gallery, Bath / 15 February – 26 May / *victoriagal.org.uk/listing-calendar*

LISTEN

Forbidden love

The Well of Loneliness by Radclyffe Hall (pictured below) was published in 1928. The tale of an upper-class lesbian, Stephen Gordon, it famously ends with the plea, "Give us also the right to our existence", and is now recognised as a key text in the history of gay fiction. In its time, though, the book was widely attacked by conservative commentators, notably by *Sunday Express* editor James Douglas. The furore eventually led to Hall's book being at the centre of an obscenity case.

Written by Shelley Silas and starring Kate Fleetwood as Hall, a gripping new radio drama tells the story of the trial as part of Radio 4's Riot Girls strand.

Riot Girls: The Trial of the Well of Loneliness
BBC Radio 4 / Scheduled for 25 January

WEEKLY TV & RADIO
Visit *historyextra.com* for weekly updates on upcoming TV and radio programmes

BBC Two's fly-on-the-wall series gives viewers an insight into the inner workings of the V&A and its diverse collections

WATCH

Great exhibitions

In many respects, the 2.3 million-plus artefacts at the Victoria and Albert Museum could hardly be more eclectic. This historic institution has the responsibility for looking after everything from Queen Victoria's coronet to Kylie Minogue's travelling wardrobe.

What unites the items is that they tell a story of how the fields of art, design and performance have evolved over 5,000 years. Caring for them requires the expertise of numerous curators, conservators and technicians, whose work we see in fascinating detail in the BBC Two series *Secrets of the Museum*. Sometimes that means intervening to prevent an object's condition deteriorating – as with Pumpie, a toy elephant who has been attacked by moths.

We also see the work that goes into preparing exhibitions, such as when a member of the public loans a mini-dress for a Mary Quant show – a much-loved garment that needs all the considerable expertise of conservator Frances to get it looking its best.

Secrets of the Museum
BBC Two / Scheduled for late January

MUSÉE D'IXELLES – BRUXELLES / COURTESY OF INSTITUT FÜR KULTURAUSTAUSCH, TÜBINGEN

A new programme discusses Elisabeth 'Lilo' Gloeden, who stood trial for treason against the Nazi regime

WATCH & LISTEN

Bearing witness

The images become no less shocking with time. In April 1945, British and Canadian troops reached Bergen-Belsen concentration camp to find emaciated inmates and the unburied bodies of the dead. Here were prisoners dying of starvation, and of tuberculosis, typhoid and dysentery – diseases of contemptuous neglect.

Seventy-five years on, *Belsen: Our Story* (BBC Two, late January) mixes archive footage and new survivor interviews. The documentary is one of several programmes across the BBC linked to Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January, including *The Windermere Children* (BBC Two, late January), which tells a true story of young survivors brought to the UK. *Confronting Holocaust Denial with David Baddiel* (BBC Two, February) sees the star asking why some people still deny what happened.

On BBC Radio 4, *Archive on 4: The Science of Evil* (27 January) offers portraits of five founding fathers of social psychology – all Jewish and all Holocaust survivors – who sought to understand why people commit evil acts against others. Meanwhile, in *The Remarkable Resilience of Lilo* (BBC Radio 4, scheduled for 25 January), Fergal Keane tells the compelling and tragic story of one woman's stand against Nazism.

Holocaust programmes

Across BBC television and radio / Check latest listings for further details

GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

HISTORY ON THE BOX

"People made a concealing belt to put around Michelangelo's *David* because they didn't want to see the penis"

Cambridge classics professor **MARY BEARD** tells us about her new two-part BBC series, which explores the history of the nude and its central place in western art, while also tackling modern debates over censorship

Is the story of the nude one of exploitation, or is it more complex than that?
The sense of the nude as the object of the male gaze – that's as long as the history of the female nude itself. But we also have to think harder and more interestingly about how we look at the nude, about who's looking, and how you can look a bit subversively.

There are great examples of this. One of the paintings we talk about is a wonderful work by Johan Zoffany (1733–1810) called *The Tribuna of the Uffizi* [a Florence gallery room where the Medici art collection was housed, see below]. There's a lot of naked female flesh. A lot of the guys are literally leering up the bum of the Venus de' Medici! What the painter is doing, 200 years before the feminism of the 1960s, is outing them, asking what these old guys are really after – even saying: "Don't they look silly?"

Were controversies about nudes there from the start, in that people look at nudes and say: "Hang on a minute…"?
Yeah – and they say "Hang on a minute" in all sorts of ways. Each generation tends to think that it's fighting its battles over the nude first, but these controversies go back to the ancient world and continue throughout the west ever after.

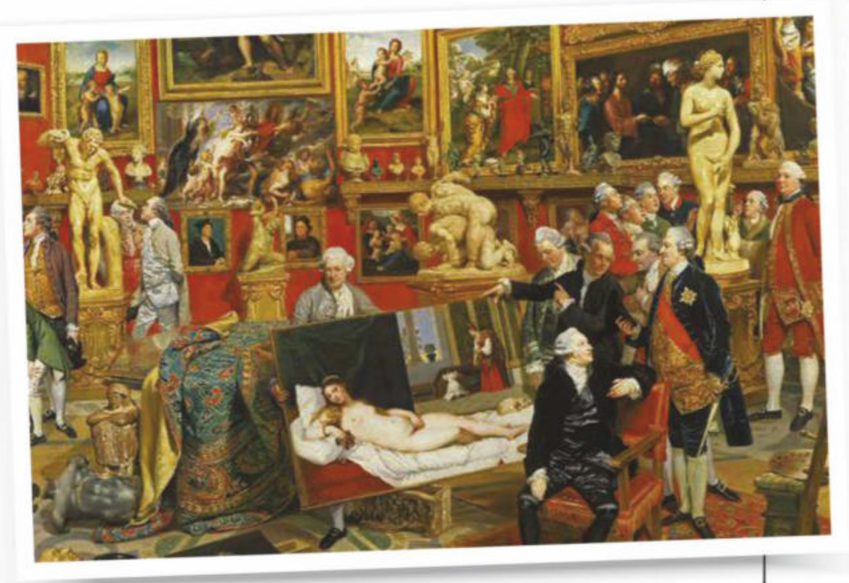
One of my favourite examples is Michelangelo's *David*. It's now a masterpiece of art. But when it was first put up, it was very worrisome. People pelted it with things, then they made it a little concealing belt to put around it because they didn't want to see the penis.

Have you tried to look beyond the western tradition?
Wonderful naked figures are everywhere. But we didn't want the shows to be a travelogue. We spent time looking at, for instance, Yoruba art from Nigeria. But part of the argument is that, while you can hardly find a culture in which the naked body is not represented, [the west's] *obsession* with the nude – partly as a focus of desire – looks weird from the outside.

I don't think there's another culture in the world – though you have to be careful when you say things like this – where the absolute centre of traditional art training is naked art drawing.

Do you have a favourite moment from filming the series?
There were all kinds of highlights. Some hen parties now do male life drawing and one generous party let us join them. I'm completely hopeless at drawing, but it was interesting to experience what it was like to sit with a group of people, all of whom are looking at a man who had stripped off. I was not very happy with the results of my own artistic efforts!

The new two part series **Mary Beard's Shock of the Nude** is scheduled to be shown on BBC Two in February



Male art connoisseurs are depicted leering at nudes in Johan Zoffany's *The Tribuna of the Uffizi*

These sweet, milk-steamed dumplings are typically enjoyed with vanilla sauce or custard

TASTE

Dampfnudeln

These steamed dumplings are a popular dessert enjoyed across Germany, but they hold a special place in the hearts of those who live in the Rhineland village of Freckenfeld.

When Swedish troops occupied Freckenfeld during the Thirty Years' War, quick-thinking local baker Johannes Muck decided to make a huge batch of *Dampfnudeln* as a form of ransom, placating the hungry attackers and saving the lives of villagers in the process.

An ornamental gate was later erected in Muck's honour, adorned with 1,286 little stone bumps to represent each one he baked – a local landmark that can still be seen today.

Difficulty: 7/10 **Time:** 2hrs 20min

INGREDIENTS

For the dampfnudeln:

150ml milk
90g caster sugar
7g sachet fast-action yeast
400g plain flour
1 large egg, lightly beaten
70g unsalted butter, melted

For the poaching liquid:

250ml whole milk
50g sugar
50g butter

METHOD To make the dumplings, heat the milk to lukewarm. Stir in one teaspoon of the sugar and the dried yeast and leave in a warm place for 10 minutes until bubbles begin to appear on the surface.

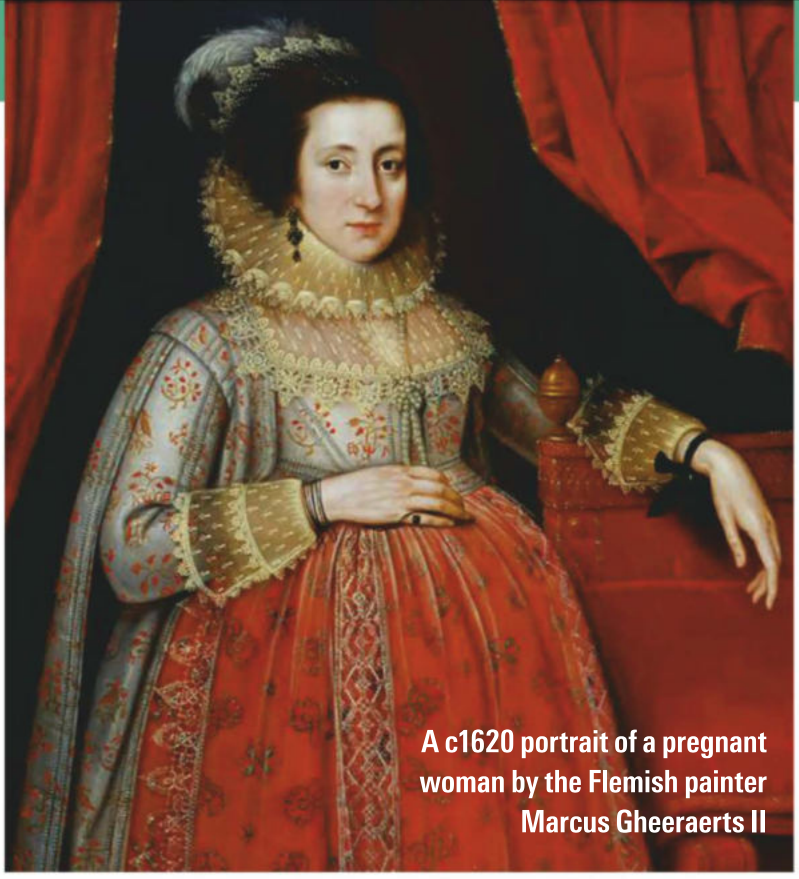
In a mixing bowl, combine the flour, the remaining sugar, egg, butter and the yeast mixture. Stir with a spoon before using your hands once the dough starts to come together in a ball. Tip onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and springy. Put the dough in a greased bowl, cover with film and leave to rise for one hour.

When the dough has almost finished proving, prepare the poaching liquid. Put the milk, sugar and butter in a lidded pan and heat until the butter has melted and the sugar is dissolved.

Divide the dough into eight equal portions and shape into balls. Pop the dumplings into the liquid, making sure they are sitting on the base of the pan with a little space in between each one. Replace the lid and don't remove it for the first 25 minutes of cooking. Keep the heat low under the pan so the dumplings are poaching.

After 25 minutes, check the tops of the dumplings feel firm, then remove the lid and cook for a further five minutes. Serve immediately, ideally with vanilla sauce or custard.

Recipe from bbcgoodfood.com



A c1620 portrait of a pregnant woman by the Flemish painter Marcus Gheeraerts II

VISIT

Fertile imagination

Before the advent of modern contraception, women expected to spend the majority of their adult lives dealing with the travails of pregnancy and childbirth. Despite this, artistic representations of pregnant female bodies prior to the mid-20th century are exceedingly rare – a factor shaped by conservative social attitudes in previous eras.

A new show at London's Foundling Museum brings together several notable exceptions, including a poignant picture of George IV's daughter, Princess Charlotte, who died shortly after childbirth in 1817. Depictions of pregnancy in more recent years are also examined, with photographs of actress Demi Moore and pop icon Beyoncé among the many highlights on display.

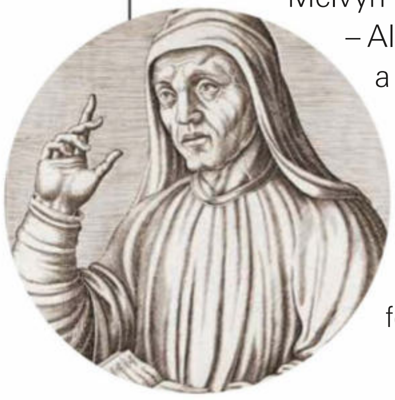
Portraying Pregnancy: From Holbein to Social Media
The Foundling Museum, London / 24 January – 26 April / *foundlingmuseum.org.uk/events/portraying-pregnancy*

LISTEN

A mind that mattered

In AD 781, the English scholar Alcuin of York (c732–804; pictured below) set out from Northumbria for Rome. He ended up waylaid at the court of King Charlemagne, where he became one of the monarch's leading advisors and an important figure in the Carolingian Renaissance, in part as the main proponent of an easily read manuscript hand known as Carolingian minuscule.

So what was it about Alcuin that so impressed the monarch? It's a question discussed by Melvyn Bragg and his academic guests – Alcuin's spiritual successors – in a new episode of *In Our Time,* the long-running intellectual discussion series.



In Our Time
BBC Radio 4 / Episode scheduled for 30 January

TATE

WATCH

Indomitable spirit

Having delved into history's absurdities with *The Death of Stalin*, Armando Iannucci's latest feature finds him returning to fiction with an adaptation of a novel that delights in absurdity: Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*.

Dev Patel (*Slumdog Millionaire*) stars as Copperfield, a good-natured, optimistic young man raised primarily by his nursemaid, Peggotty (Daisy May Cooper), and whose life changes abruptly when he acquires a nasty stepfather, Mr Murdstone (Darren Boyd), a man who installs his formidable sister as his housekeeper. Sent out into an uncaring world, the young Copperfield becomes our window on Victorian society at different levels.

Not that Iannucci makes too much of 19th-century inequities, although they're certainly acknowledged. His *Copperfield* is at heart a gentle film, and it's probably no coincidence that some of the best performances here – notably Hugh Laurie as Mr Dick, gently revisiting the spirit of his *Blackadder* and *Jeeves and Wooster* years – rest on comic timing.

Purists may be upset that some of Dickens's best-known lines are missing, and some may crave a little more grit, but it's an irresistibly fresh and funny take on *Copperfield*.

The Personal History of David Copperfield
Released 24 January / Cert: PG

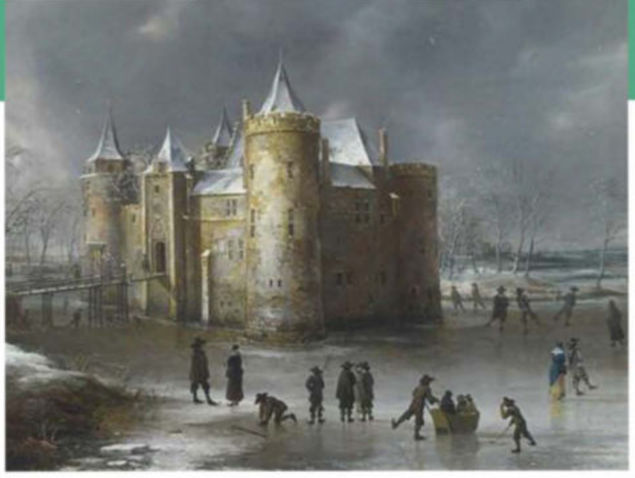
VISIT

Norsing around

Now in its 36th year, the Jorvik Viking Centre's annual festival shows no signs of slowing down, with another nine days packed full of hands-on activities set to take place across York in February.

The 2020 festival will focus on Viking voyages, with visitors able to enjoy battle re-enactments and learn about the Norse goods once sold far and wide.

Jorvik Viking Festival 2020
Various venues across York / 15–23 February / *jorvik vikingfestival.co.uk*



Jan Beerstraaten's *The Castle of Muiden in Winter* (1658)

VISIT

Reconstructing history

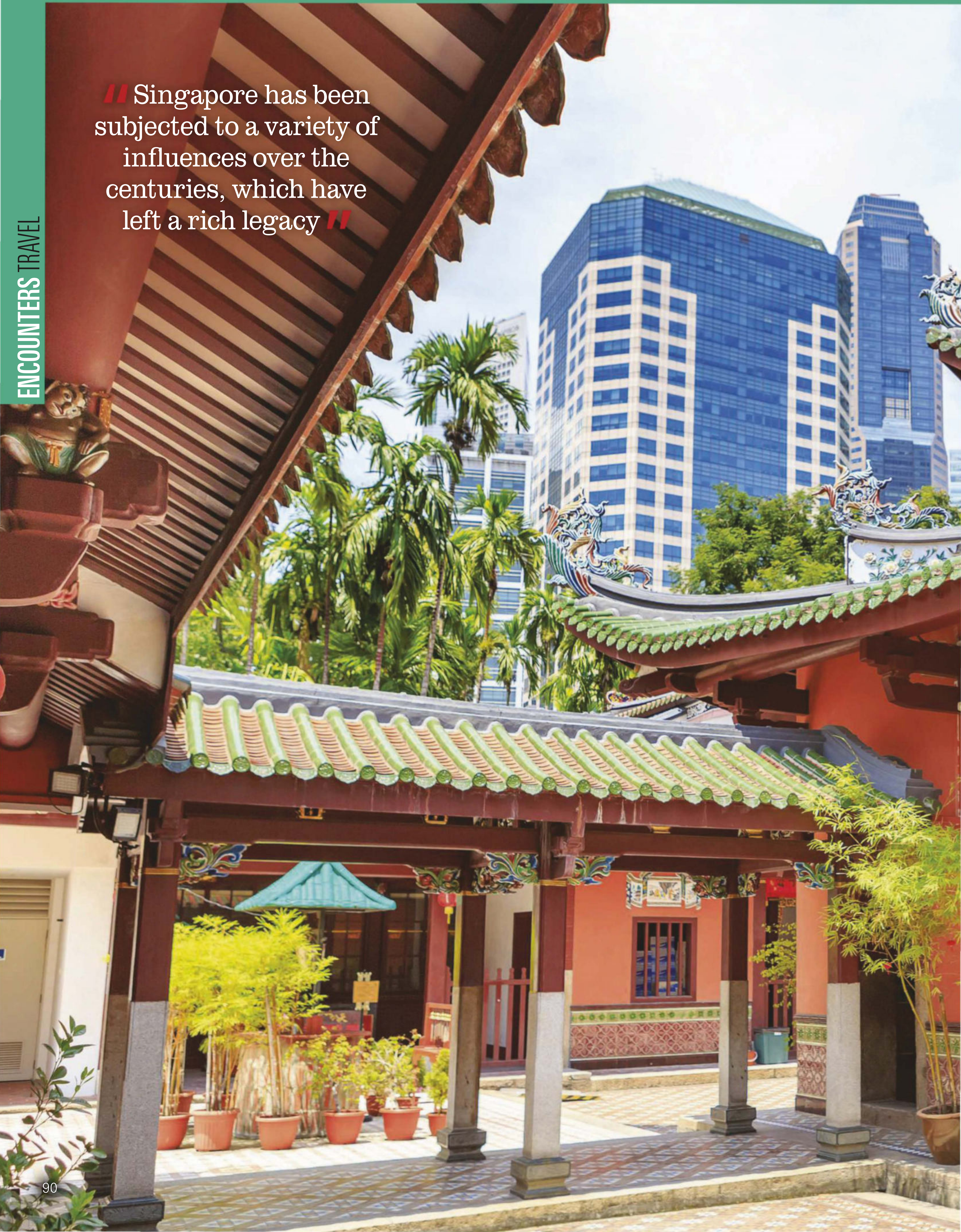
Paintings showing some of Europe's most impressive castles and fortresses are visiting Cardiff as part of an exhibition of works from London's National Gallery.

Displayed for the first time in Wales – a nation often dubbed the 'land of castles' – they are accompanied by pieces from the National Museum Wales collections, revealing how artists have used castle motifs to represent the nation's wild and majestic landscapes.

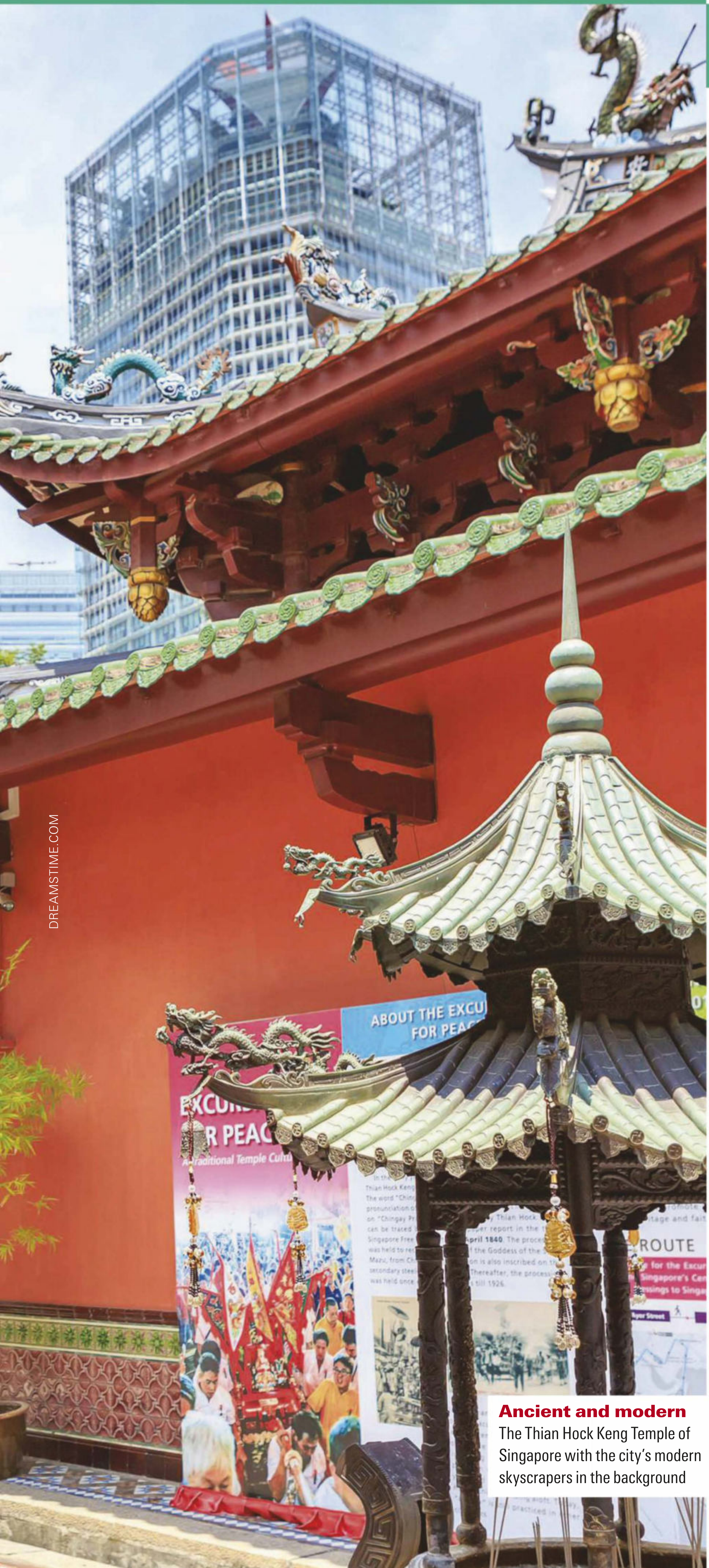
Imagine a Castle: Paintings from the National Gallery, London
National Museum Cardiff / 28 January – 10 May / Free entry / *museum.wales/cardiff/whatson*

Armando Iannucci's unconventional take on a Charles Dickens classic has already received acclaim

ANTHONY CHAPPEL-ROSS / THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON



> "Singapore has been subjected to a variety of influences over the centuries, which have left a rich legacy"



DREAMSTIME.COM

Ancient and modern
The Thian Hock Keng Temple of Singapore with the city's modern skyscrapers in the background

Island city of the ages

Singapore presents a thoroughly modern image, from the futurism of the 250-acre Gardens by the Bay park to the rooftop infinity pool at the Marina Bay Sands hotel. Yet this island state is also an excellent choice for anyone looking to explore south-east Asia's history. Its strategic location and importance as a trading centre means it has been subjected to a variety of influences over the centuries, which have left a rich legacy in culture, faiths and food.

Singapore's colonial history began in 1819 when Sir Stamford Raffles negotiated a treaty with the Johor Sultanate. A key moment in the colonial story was of course the Second World War, which is extensively documented, from underground tunnels at Fort Siloso and Battlebox to the Former Ford Factory where the British surrendered in 1942. The country's postwar story and eventual independence in 1965 is also fascinating. The National Museum of Singapore and Asian Civilisations Museum put these events in context.

Other aspects of Singapore's story are best experienced by diving in to everyday life. Both the Indian and Chinese cultures that have had such an impact on Singapore are well represented by heritage centres. Exploring the varied and colourful temples, churches and mosques of the city underlines its multicultural past and present. You can of course round off your visit with a Singapore Sling cocktail at Raffles Hotel.

Singapore is one of the best-connected places to visit in the world. It is perfectly positioned as a stopover if travelling elsewhere in Asia or on to Australia and New Zealand. For this reason, it features in many excellent value round-the-world tickets. It is also at one end of a regularly trodden overland route north through Malaysia and Thailand if you're planning to see more of the region.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

- Another gateway to south-east Asia, the modern Malaysian metropolis of **Kuala Lumpur** has a rich colonial legacy, a walkable centre and superb museums and markets.
- If you are interested in colonial history, then **Mumbai, India** is an essential destination. Besides its landmarks and historic monuments, it is also a very modern Indian metropolis.

By Tom Hall, travel writer and author of *Lonely Planet's Best Ever Travel Tips*

HALF TERM *Heritage*

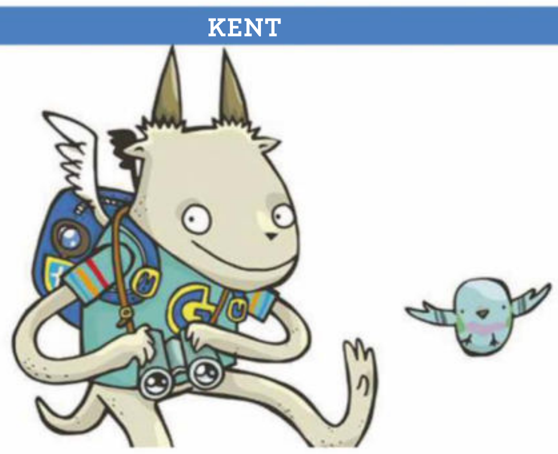
SURREY

Gatwick Aviation Museum

This Aviation Museum in Gatwick has a unique collection of British aircraft from the "golden age" of British aircraft manufacture. From the end of WWII until the 1970s British aircraft designers produced some of the most innovative and advanced aircraft of the day.

01293 862417 // gatwick-aviation-museum.co.uk

KENT



Gargoyle Week, Canterbury Cathedral

This half-term, explore medieval tiles with Canterbury Archaeology Trust and have the chance to create your own Gregory Gargoyle tile to take home with you. Activities are free, normal precinct charges apply. Children must be accompanied at all times. 18-20 February 2020, 11.00-15.00 at Canterbury Cathedral Community Studio.

canterbury-cathedral.org // visits@canterbury-cathedral.org

EAST SUSSEX

Shipwreck Museum

A small museum, set in the historic Old Town of Hastings with a fascinating collection of shipwreck and shipwreck-related artefacts, including the remains of the earliest seagoing vessel ever discovered in the northen hemisphere. Find out all about our two major local wrecks, the Dutch East Indiaman *Amsterdam* and Charles II's warship *Anne*. Free admission.

01424 437452 // shipwreckmuseum.co.uk

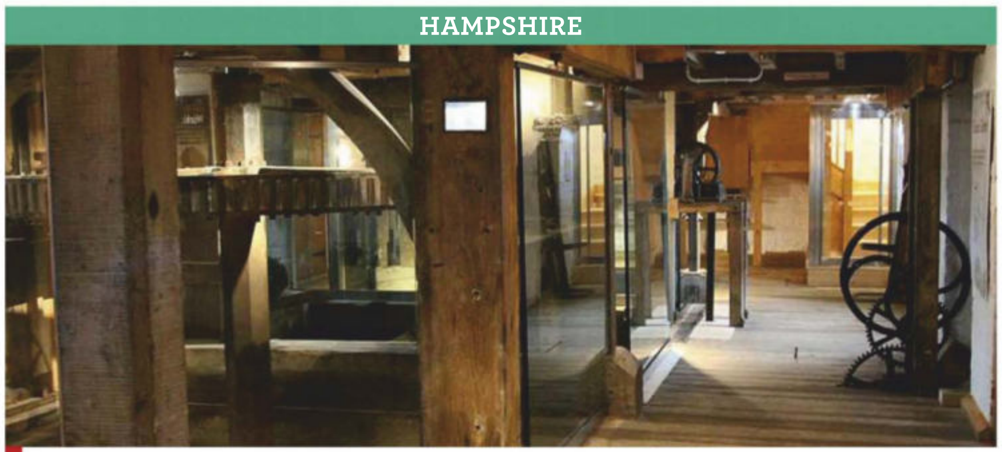
PEMBROKESHIRE

Picton Castle & Gardens

Set in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and surrounded by a 40 acre RHS Partner Garden, Picton Castle originated in the 13th century, with a splendid Georgian wing added in the 1790s. A treasured family home for over 700 years, the elegant rooms feature opulent French furnishings, fireplaces and fine works of art including the controversial 'Picton Renoir'.

01437 751326 // pictoncastle.co.uk

HAMPSHIRE

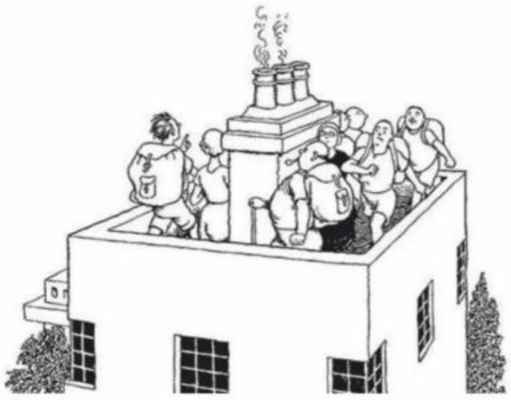


Eling Tide Mill Experience

Eling Tide Mill has stood at the centre of life in Eling for centuries and is one of only a handful of working tide mills left in the UK. The Visitor Centre (which houses the Discovery Room), Mill Café, gift shop and surrounding riverside walks, combine to form The Eling Tide Mill Experience. Mention this ad to receive a 10% discount off admission.

elingtidemillexperience.co.uk

MIDDLESEX



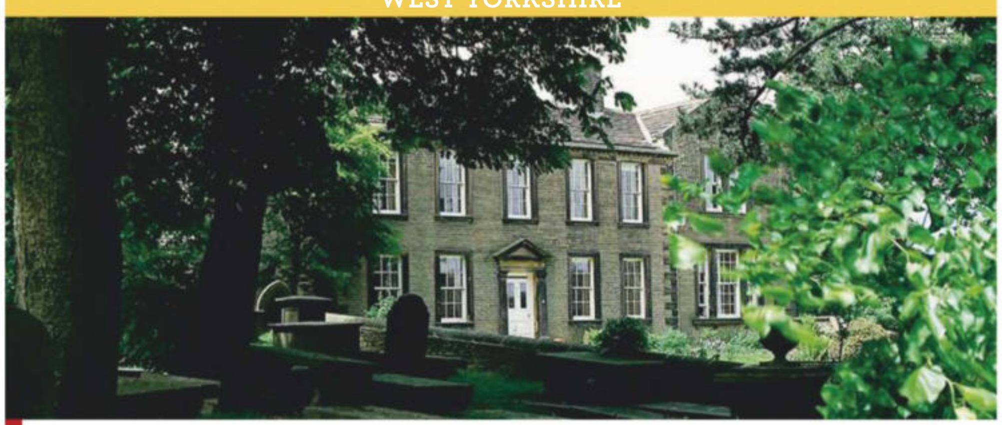
Heath Robinson Museum

Explore the genius of William Heath Robinson at the Heath Robinson Museum in Pinner. Explore Heath Robinson's life and work, learn about the history of illustration in our quarterly special exhibitions and get creative in our Activity Studio. Check out our website for information on workshops and activities. Open Thursday - Sunday 11am to 4pm.

020 8866 8420 // heathrobinsonmuseum.org

With half term round the corner, now is the best
time to plan an adventure with all the historians in your life

WEST YORKSHIRE



Brontë Parsonage Museum

Set in the picturesque village of Haworth against the Yorkshire moors, the Brontë Parsonage Museum houses the world's largest collection of Brontë furniture, clothes and personal possessions and offers an inspirational and evocative experience for people of all ages. 2020 highlights include the recently acquired Charlotte Brontë 'little book'.

01535 642323 // bronte.org.uk

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NORTH EAST

Newcastle Castle

Open 7-days per week from 10am until 5pm, you can visit the family-friendly historic attraction, located in Newcastle city centre, to reveal the story of how Newcastle began. Steeped in history, Newcastle Castle is the reason the city got its name and an imposing Norman fortress, which serves as a rugged reminder of Northern England's turbulent history.

newcastlecastle.co.uk

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CIVIL DEFEN
AMBULANCE

National Emergency Services Museum

Based in a historic fire, police and ambulance station, Sheffield's National Emergency Services Museum is the world's largest joint 999 museum. Across three floors of interactive displays, hands-on history and vintage vehicles we tell the story of the country's emergency services and their extraordinary heritage.

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0114 2491 999 // emergencymuseum.org.uk

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Chichester District's award-winning museum is situated in the heart of the city centre. Built over an exposed Roman bathhouse, it has three floors of fascinating exhibitions and displays. Every May half term the museum hosts Chichester Roman Week featuring a large scale re-enactment, talks, trails, guided tours, family activities and more.

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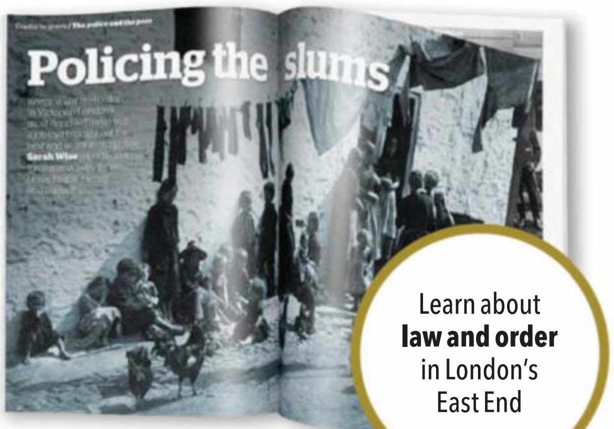
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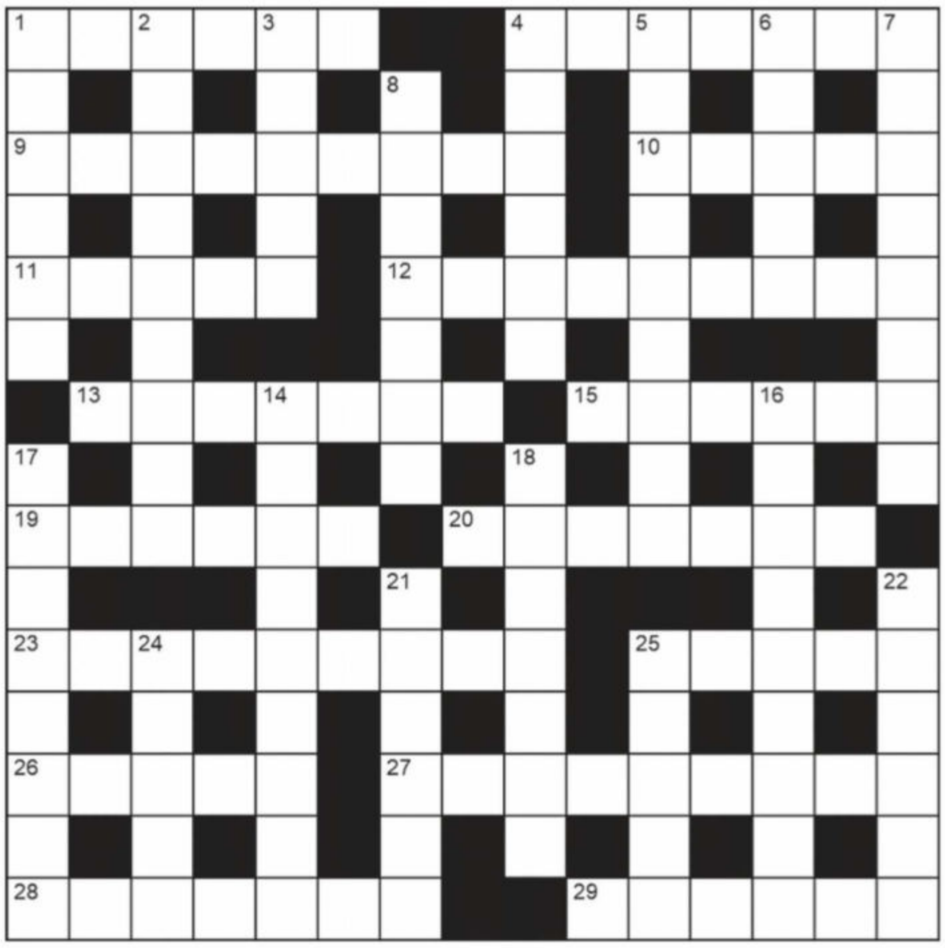

Across

1 Sir John William ____, who, with another British aviator, made the first non-stop Atlantic flight (6)

4 The legendary seat of King Arthur's court, claimed to have been located at Winchester (7)

9/15 Its success led to the re-dedication of the Second Temple, celebrated by the Jewish festival of Hanukkah (9,6)

10 The First Battle of the ___ marked the start of trench warfare on the western front in September 1914 (5)

11 Land allocated to a parish priest in feudal times (5)

12 The north-eastern part of South Africa settled by migrating Afrikaners in the 19th century (9)

13 Capital of Egypt during the Old Kingdom (7)

15 See 9 across

19 Richard ____, Earl of Tyrconnell was a leader of the Irish Roman Catholics in the 1689–91 war against William of Orange (6)

20 Maltese politician whose parliamentary career spanned more than 50 years (7)

23 A great royal hunting ground of southern England, established by William the Conqueror (3,6)

25 City of Iraq which is the port from which Sinbad voyaged in *One Thousand and One Nights* (5)

26 Member of Scott's 1910–12 south pole expedition who made a suicidal act of self-sacrifice (5)

27 Family name of Elizabeth, queen consort of the UK from 1936 to 1952 (5-4)

28 Part of England colonised by the Vikings that had its own legal system (7)

29 Athenian school of philosophy founded in a gymnasium by Aristotle (6)

Down

1 County town that developed around the hill fort of Ard Mhacha, the site of St Patrick's principal church of Ireland during the fifth century (6)

2 Inventor of the hovercraft, Christopher ____ (9)

3 A peasant poet, rediscovered as a major English poet many years after his death in an insane asylum in 1864 (5)

4 Walled, fortified town of north Wales, founded by Edward I in 1283 (6)

5 A method of basing entitlement to benefits etc on personal resources, as with the 1948 National Assistance Act (5,4)

6 Adriatic island, now called Vis, location of an 1811 battle in which the British defeated the French/Venetian navies (5)

7 Systematic German bombing raids on British cities, from September 1940 to May 1941 (3,5)

8 The first leader in Russian history to be elected by popular vote (7)

14 In ancient Rome, a high-ranking administrator whose one-year term was extended (or someone who acted on behalf of an administrator) (9)

16 Defensive earthwork built by an eighth-century Mercian king as the boundary between his kingdom and lands belonging to the Welsh (5,4)

17 The ____ Prison Experiment was a controversial, short-lived, social psychology study carried out in a US university in 1971 (8)

18 The____ Martyrs were two Scottish female Protestant 'Covenanters', who in 1685 were tied to stakes in the mudflats and allowed to drown with the rising tide (7)

21 English admiral, hailed as a hero for his pursuit of French vessels in the West Indies in 1702, despite four of his captains refusing to fight (6)

22 US showman who turned his circus into 'The Greatest Show on Earth' (6)

24 In Anglo-Saxon times, the council used by the king when he needed advice (5)

25 ____ Berkeley, choreographer of spectacular Hollywood musicals, such as the 1933 hit *42nd Street* (5)

Who invented the hovercraft? *(see 2 down)*

……………

Compiled by
Eddie James

HOW TO ENTER

● Open to residents of the UK (inc Channel Islands). Post entries to ***BBC History Magazine*, February 2020 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to ***february2020@historycomps.co.uk*** by 5pm on **19 February 2020**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the April 2020 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at *immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/* ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ☐ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: *bbcstudios.com/privacy. – bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct*

Solution to our Christmas 2019 crossword

Across: 9 Irangate 10 Lithograph 12 Tonga 13 Potsdam 15 Luxor 16 Soe 17 Braille 18 Stealth 20 Hogarth 23 Oregon Trail 24 Penny red 25 Tiberius 29 Adams 31 Tamil 33 Silesia 34 Ajaccio 35/26 Charles Rolls 37/17D Red Baron 38 Ionia 40 Clement 41 Boone 42 Marie Curie 43 Uncle Sam

Down: 1 Nietzsche 2 Cannae 3 Agra 4 Utopia 5 Birdseye 6 Thomas Hobbes 7 Vaux 8 Churchill 11 Gilbert 14 Telford 19 Leagues 21 Guevara 22 Herstmonceux 25 Tallage 27 Paganism 28 Waldheim 30 Socrates 32 Michelin 36/41 Lutine Bell 37 Riots 39 Nery

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David Jellings, Bristol

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historyextra.com/little-women

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historyextra.com/elizabeth-manuscript

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9 rulers and royals who stepped down

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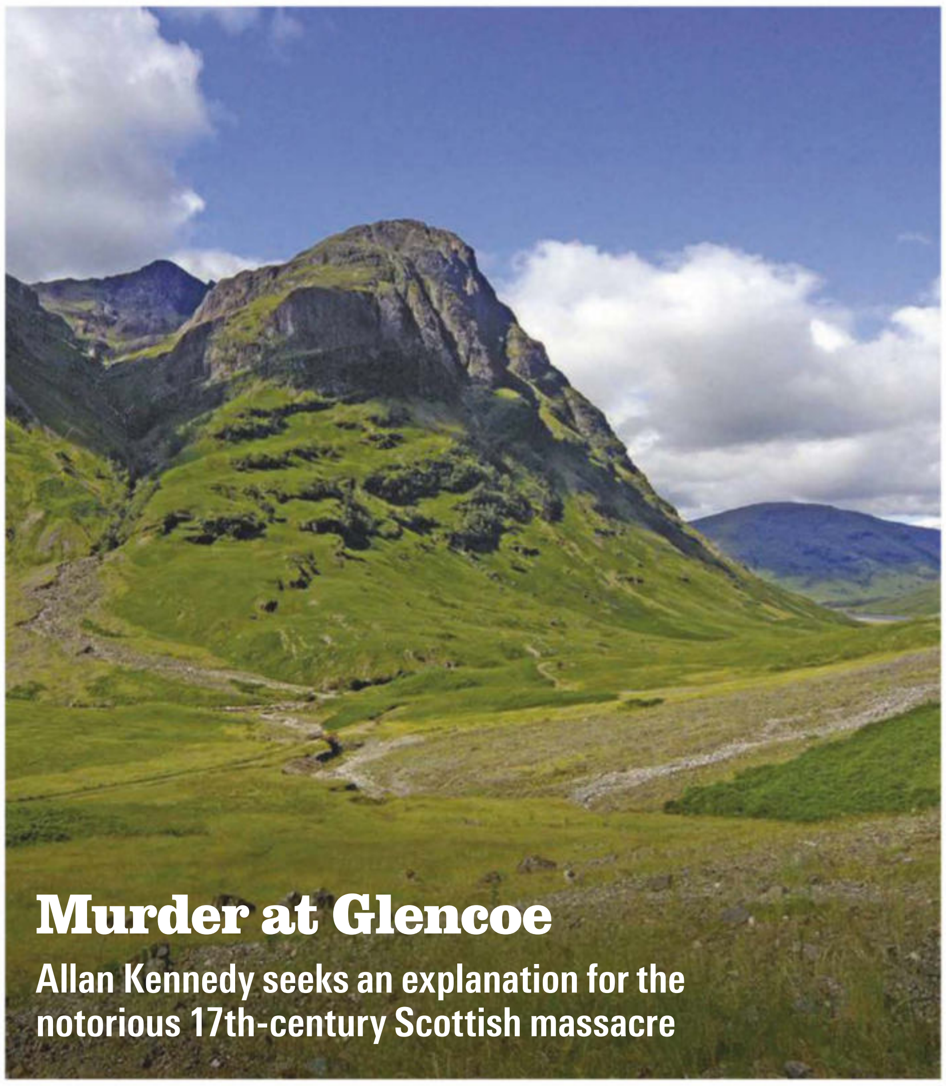
NEXT MONTH

March issue on sale 20 February 2020



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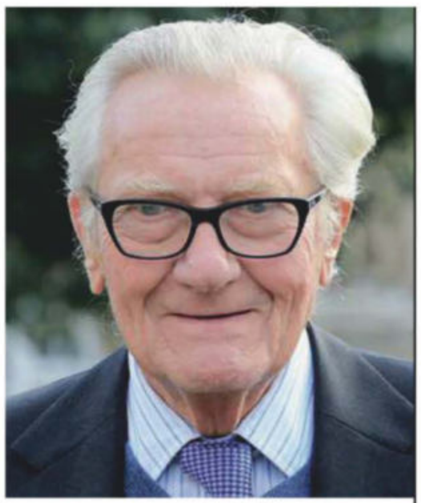
MY HISTORY HERO

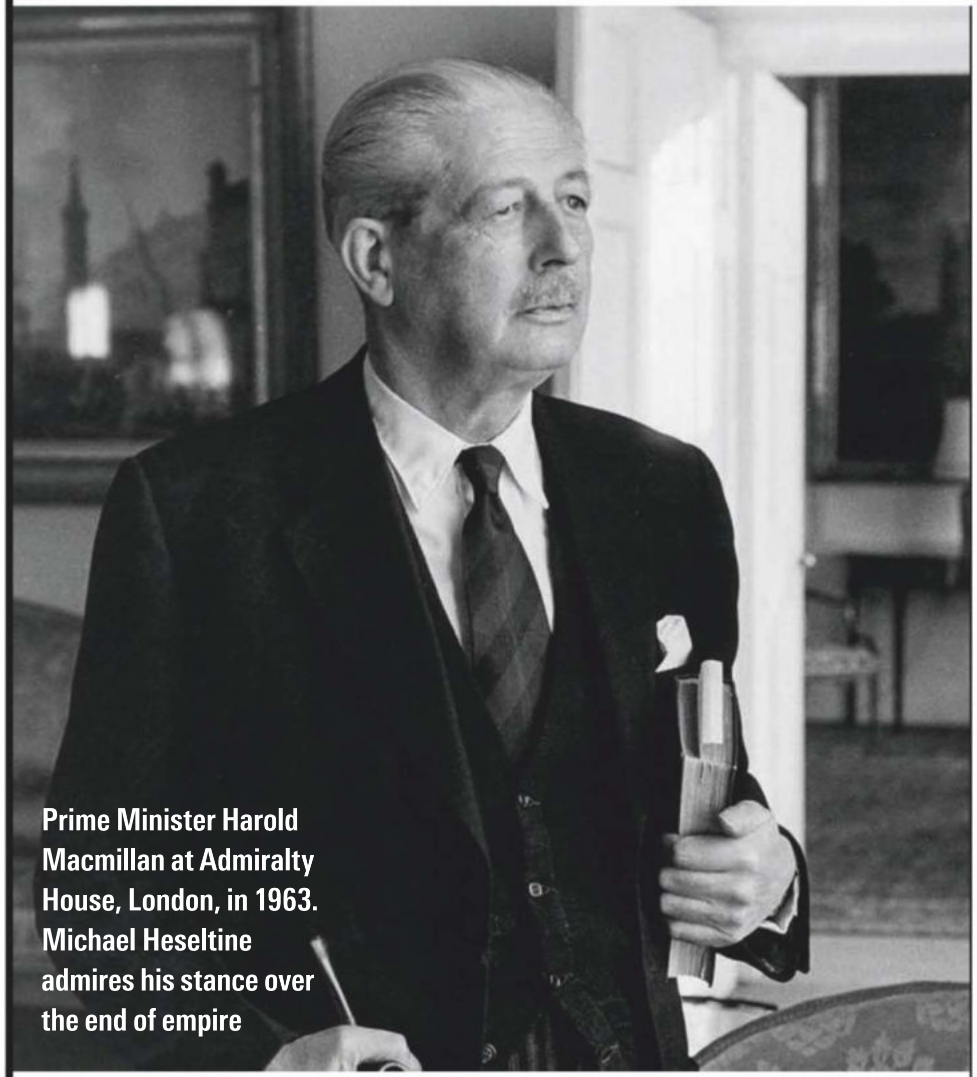
__Michael Heseltine__, former deputy prime minister, chooses

Harold Macmillan

1894–1986



Michael Heseltine was a Conservative MP from 1966–2001 and held positions in the Thatcher and Major governments. He is president of the European Movement UK (*europeanmovement.co.uk*)



Prime Minister Harold Macmillan at Admiralty House, London, in 1963. Michael Heseltine admires his stance over the end of empire

IN PROFILE

Harold Macmillan (1894–1986), dubbed 'Supermac', was leader of the Conservative party and Britain's prime minister from 1957–63. Born in London and educated at Eton and Oxford, he served with distinction in the Grenadier Guards in the First World War, and was wounded at the battle of the Somme. An MP for nearly 40 years, he famously declared that most Britons had "never had it so good", and led the Tories to victory in the 1959 election. He died aged 92, and remains Britain's second longest-lived prime minister.

> " Macmillan was aware of the reality of Britain's position in the fast-changing postwar, post-imperial world "

When did you first hear about Macmillan? I first became interested in politics when I was about 18, so it was around that time. He was already a figure of some repute when I was a graduate at Oxford University in the early 1950s. He'd been a Conservative MP since 1924, and in 1938 had published *The Middle Way*, in which he had advocated the broadly centrist political and economic philosophy that both he and I shared.

What kind of man was he? Macmillan was a brilliant conversationalist and a great speaker, and had an incredible knowledge of history. I interviewed him for a magazine I acquired in 1959 called *Man About Town* (later *Town*), which was a bit like a British *Esquire* or *GQ*. That was the first time I met him. I remember our photographer Terry Donovan telling him where and how to stand – he wasn't going to be pushed around by a prime minister! – and I got embarrassed. Suddenly, Macmillan walked out of the room and I thought: "That's it – there goes my career!" But eventually he came back. "I wanted to ensure that Lady Dorothy was properly dressed before I showed you the building [Admiralty House]," was his explanation.

What made him a hero? The braveness of the stance he took on major issues that aroused great passions in the Conservative party, like the end of empire, and Europe. He put his reputation and integrity on the line. The nostalgia for all that had gone before was still widely held – and indeed, still is held by a significant part of the population. But he realised that the British empire was drawing to a close and we had to turn the page. That's why he applied, despite opposition from within his own party, to join the European Economic Community: he believed he'd found us a new destiny, which he articulated and pursued, but without success. [The French president, Charles de Gaulle, vetoed Britain's application in 1963.]

What was his finest hour? I was very impressed by the 'Wind of Change' speech he made in South Africa in 1960. In effect, he said he would not block the process of decolonisation in Africa and elsewhere that led to many British colonies gaining their independence. He was saying something the Conservative party did not want to hear, but he was aware of the reality of Britain's position in the fast-changing postwar, post-imperial world. Also, I rather sympathised with his 1985 speech in which he compared Margaret Thatcher's privatisation policy with selling off "the Georgian silver". Too much of the consequent cash went on tax cuts.

What would he have made of Brexit? He would think it a monumental disaster – selling out British interests in the most awful way. H

Lord Heseltine was talking to York Membery

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